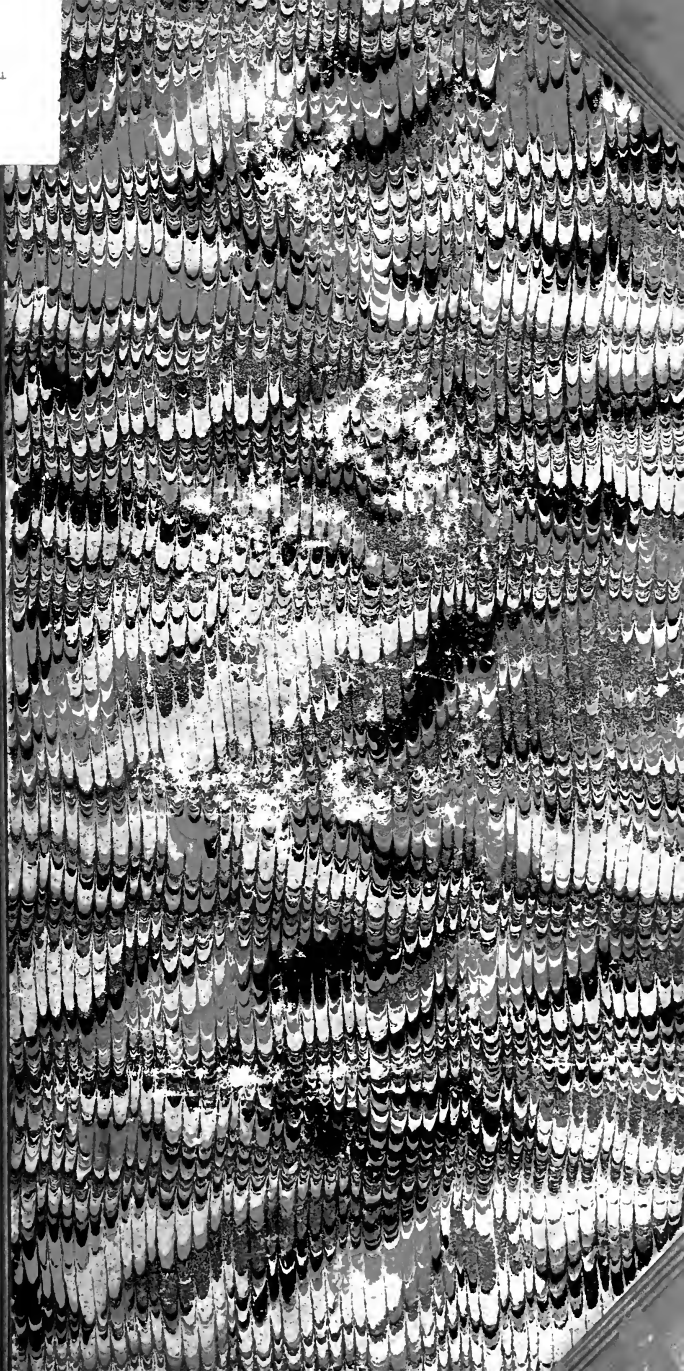


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# THE HEIRESS;

A NOVEL.

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"She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes,"—*Byron.*

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.  
(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.)

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1833.

J. B. NICHOLS AND SON, 25, PARLIAMENT-STREET.

## THE HEIRESS.

## CHAPTER I.

SHE walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies ;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes :  
Thus mellow'd to that tender light,  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impair'd the nameless grace  
Which waves in every *auburn* tress,  
Or softly lightens o'er her face ;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent—  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart where all is innocent !

BYRON.

It was towards the end of May ; not  
sufficiently warm to occasion a dislike to  
motion ; not one of those still and noiseless

evenings, whose almost death-like silence fills the mind with a feeling resembling awe, if not awe itself; when the heart, ashamed of its own emotion amid such an unearthly calm, yields to the dreamy softness of the scene—or, wretched and repining itself, quarrels with the rebuking calm, and

“ To stillness gives  
The cold, harsh names of brutal apathy.”

No!—it was an evening the very reverse of such an one. It was, like life, all change—half hope—half fear—mingling and mixing, till it would have been difficult to tell which had the mastery. It seemed formed to delight:

“ Who would not view  
The green earth always green,  
Or the blue sky always blue?”

True it was an azure sky; but then there were clouds of fantastic shape, careering o’er its sea of blue, and changing the shadows and the shades of all beneath. It was warm, but then there was a light fresh breeze playing around, and rustling the bright green leaves. The bustle of the day was over, but the birds were not yet weary of singing; the labourer whistled as he sought his humble but happy home; the mother sat at her cottage door,

singing to the crowing baby in her lap; and the merry children laughed and shouted as they joined in the animated game of cricket, or chased each other across the common.

Perhaps I should coax few to agree with me, were I to say I consider this scene of childish merriment to be in strict accordance with the shifting shade and sunshine on the surrounding woods and fields; and yet to my mind such is the fact. I dote on children, but I never see them playing, that the thought of their future trials and sorrows does not cause the sigh to mingle with the smile, and shadow the brightness of that which is, by anticipating the gloom of what may be. I might, were I so inclined, appeal to the frowns and sullen looks of more than one urchin, as proofs that even the dawn of life is not without its storms, and that the infant of seven may, comparatively speaking, suffer as much from wounded pride and disappointed ambition as the elder of seventy:—but I am not so inclined.

The hours of childhood are, perhaps, the brightest portions of our existence, and in most minds the season of purer thoughts and more generous feelings than our after-lives exhibit. Jack may frown, and Jane may look sullen; the one may cry to lose his top, the other to break her

doll ; but the frown, and the sullen look, and the grief for the lost plaything, will pass away, and be seen no more ; even as yon tiny dark cloud, gliding across the azure sky, will disappear in the west, “and leave not a shadow behind.” Alas ! alas ! it is not so in after-life ; and it is this that makes the chief difference between the sorrows of childhood and the sorrows of manhood ; the sorrows of the child are fleeting, the grief of a moment !—the sorrows of the man are lasting, the grief of years ! The storm of an hour, though furious, may be forgotten, and its trace effaced ; for the storm of years there is no Lethe ! it is the constant dripping that wears the stone ; it is the last feather that breaks the camel’s back.

But why pursue the subject ? We shall meet with enough of sorrow in our way through life, without stepping out of our path to seek it. If men and children *look* happy, let us believe them to be so ; and if we know them to be not happy, then let us think :

“ Earth has its pangs for all ; its happiest breast,  
Not his who meets them least, but bears them best.”

For my part, I mean to write as merry a book as my own rather gloomy temperament and the fashion of the times will allow ; that



is, like the evening I have tried to describe, a tale made up

“Of hopes and fears, and gloom and shine.”

What can have happened? There is neither a shout nor a laugh to be heard. The labourer has ceased to whistle in the middle of a bar; the mother forgets to play with her infant, and heeds not its wailing cry; the curs bark unchidden; the ball, discharged by a careless hand, bowls down the middle wicket, unchecked and unmarked by the staring batter. What can be the matter? and why do men, women, and children, ay, even cats and dogs, look towards that dusty road? “Sister Anne, sister Anne, what do you see coming?”

“An open landaulet and four, with two ladies inside, a man and a maid in the rumble-tumble, and a beautiful black and white setter behind.” “Who are the ladies, and what are they like?” “Time will show.”

The carriage approached; bats and balls were flung down, and all sought to gain a distinct view of the travellers. Two of the boys, encouraged by the smiles of one of the ladies, and the good-natured looks of the servant, clung to the carriage behind; whilst another parted with a portion of his supper to make friends with the handsome setter. Every hat

was off; bows and curtsies, for in this secluded village such things still were, became universal, save in one or two instances, where an excess of curiosity occasioned a forgetfulness of manners. The homage was at first silent; a murmur was heard, and then arose a long, loud, deafening shout.

A gate at the end of the common delayed the progress of the carriage for a few moments, and before it could proceed again, men were at the horses' heads, and it was surrounded by most of the inhabitants of the village of Hurlestone. The welcomes were loud and fervent. "Long life and happiness to our dear young lady!" sounded from every tongue; all crowded to catch a glimpse; all strove to win a word. Their young lady, evidently unprepared for the recognition, leant back for a moment to subdue her feelings; and, having succeeded in some slight degree, proceeded to acknowledge the courtesies of the crowd, and answer their eager inquiries and congratulations. The tears stood in her dark blue eyes, and struggled with the smile on her bright lips, as she bent forward to speak to the villagers. They listened to her tremulous but sincere thanks in perfect silence, answered by another shout, and then intimated their intention of

releasing the horses, and drawing the carriage themselves to the house. The idea distressed her, and, repressing her emotion, she spoke firmly but kindly to those around her.

“I thank you most warmly for your good wishes and kind intention, but you will, I am sure, allow me to proceed quietly and unattended at my earnest request. I left Hurlestone blessed with parents—I return an orphan; rejoicing and congratulation, therefore, ill suit the first day of my arrival. Though I decline your attendance at present, I am not the less grateful for your friendly purpose, and hope to be always welcomed home with equal warmth; and to prove I have not forgotten the precepts and examples of those we have lost. And now good evening, and a happy morrow to all.”

The people saw the tears in her eyes; felt for her sorrow, and respected her wishes. The hands were taken from the horses' reins; respectful good evenings were uttered by all, and the carriage again proceeded on its way, each one among the crowd feeling convinced that the young lady's words, and bow, and smile, were directed particularly to himself. As the carriage arrived at a turn in the road that would hide it from their sight, three

cheers were given for their young lady, and then the confusion of tongues recommenced.

Some thought her thinner, some thought her paler; each one had something to say and to think, but all agreed she was a perfect beauty, and nothing less than an angel. The confusion of Babel could but have slightly exceeded the confusion of Hurlestone, as all claimed the honour of having first recognised the Heiress; but the causes of the confusion were widely different. The former was the murmur of sinful men, who had rebelled against a just but merciful Creator: the latter was the gratitude of kind, though humble hearts, towards one who, absent or present, still had them in her thoughts, and held her riches as a precious deposit for the good of others.

Meanwhile, the carriage passed on, and the elder lady tried to rouse her companion, who, with tearful eyes bent on the surrounding woods, was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to heed the remarks of her friend.

“Helen,” she said at length, placing her hand on her niece’s arm, and thus forcing attention, “is this keeping your promise to your parents? And where is the pleasure with which you talked of revisiting your home?”

Helen started, was silent for a moment, and then spoke, though without turning round.

“Forgive me, dear aunt, the promise shall be kept; but I overrated my firmness when I talked of seeing Hurlestone with pleasure. These words have roused feelings of anguish and regret, which I had vainly hoped were laid at rest for ever. Give me my way for the next two hours, and then I hope you will complain of me no more. If you will excuse my playing hostess for the present, and proceed to the house alone, where all is ready for your reception, I will walk through the woods, and join you in time to preside at the tea-table. Nay, no remonstrance, dear aunt; it must be so for this once.”

The carriage was stopped; Helen had descended, and, smiling through her tears, kissed her hand as she disappeared among the trees, ere Mrs. Hargrave could oppose her wish. Her faithful ally and petted favourite, the setter, was as delighted as his young mistress at her leaving the carriage, and wooed and won her caresses as he bounded round her.

The woods through which she passed were beautiful. The interweaving branches formed a bright and leafy canopy above her head, and the rich moss and lovely flowers furnished a soft and luxurious carpet for her tread: occa-

sional breaks showed her glimpses of a placid lake, and verdant slopes, and mossy dells, with detached clumps of stately trees of every variety, beneath whose shade groups of deer calmly reclined, whilst the sportive fawns frolicked around in grace and confidence. All was dressed in summer's livery; bright, but not gaudy; and not a faded leaf, or withered branch, whispered of chill or change. There was no sublimity in the scene, no towering rocks, no fearful precipice, no barren shore, or stormy wave; but there was rich and peaceful beauty. It was a scene to be loved still more than admired. A Byron might have said it was tame; a Scott would have felt it was his home; the home of high and generous feelings, and the best and holiest affections of the heart. But beautiful as it was, though Helen gazed on its beauties, it was evident her heart, rather than her eyes, was engaged in the survey. The falling tear and the gentle sigh told that she viewed all as connected with some melancholy remembrances; and that the past, and not the present, occupied her thoughts.

The village clock striking seven roused her from her reverie, and she stopped no more till she entered the humble church-yard. Here she paused for a few moments, then approached, and looked through one of its gothic windows.

The one through which she gazed, overlooked a large square pew, whose well-conditioned green lining, soft hassocks, and splendidly-bound prayer books, bespoke it the possession of the great family of the village. Every thing in the pew looked comfortable and well arranged, as though it had been occupied the last Sunday; and the sun glancing through an opposite window, gave it a bright and cheerful look. And yet the sight was a shock to the fair and delicate being whose looks were bent upon it.

At first she shuddered, and veiled her eyes with her slight hands, whilst the tears fell fast through her long slender fingers, as she leant against a buttress for support. But this mood soon passed away. The hands were withdrawn, and she looked again. She thought of her promise to those who were gone. She thought of their happiness, of the sinfulness of wishing to recall them to a world of pain and suffering. She thought of the equal guilt of shrinking from her appointed trials, and deeming herself unchastened fit for heaven. She thought of all this, and her sighs were hushed, and her tears fell no longer. Her thoughts were turned from earth to heaven, and her eyes took the same direction :

“The tears  
Still linger'd in her eyes of deepest blue,  
As dew-drops on the hyacinth's azure bell;  
Whilst the soft pink that flush'd her cheek, so rich,  
And yet so delicate, was like the dawn  
Of early morn, when mist withdraws her veil.”

There was a something so pure, so spiritual, about her at that moment, that an enthusiast might have thought her an inhabitant “of upper air.”

Her four-footed favourite, not having the power to indulge in her high thoughts, became impatient of delay, and, looking up in her face, whined imploringly. It was a bright and beautiful chain he had broken, but she patted and soothed him, looked once more into that humble church-yard, and then turned away.

“What, Bran, are you impatient for your supper, or affronted at my want of attention? Both! Well then, one walk round the church-yard, one look at Hurlestone greathouse, as the villagers call it, ‘and then to supper with what appetite you may.’”

She reached her favourite corner as she spoke, and became so absorbed in her own reflections, that the motions of the dog were unnoticed, till a loud bark startled her.

“What is the matter, Bran? Cannot you wait a few moments?”

Still the barking continued. The noise was



not in accordance with her thoughts or the place, and she spoke in a more commanding tone, as he continued to bark and bay round a large square tombstone.

"Be quiet, Bran, be quiet, Bran! Bran, come here."

To her surprise, her usually obedient favourite actually rebelled, and paid no attention to her commands. Annoyed at the disturbance, she walked towards the tomb, still speaking to her dog.

"Bran, my own pet, why don't you come when I call you? What are you teasing? Some half-starved cat, or miserable hedgehog?"

At this moment rose to her view a pair of lustrous dark eyes fixed full upon her, surmounted by a profusion of curling black hair. Bushy whiskers and moustachios almost concealing a mouth, the mischievous curve of whose lips spoke full enjoyment of her dismay, completed the portrait of this alarming spy. For some moments she stood looking at him, too much surprised to move; but as the head, rising above the tomb, showed that it belonged "to a proper man and tall," blushing deeply at the awkwardness of her situation, she turned abruptly away, passed round an angle of the old building, sprang lightly over the stile, and disappeared among

the trees ere the stranger seemed fully aware she had passed from his sight. A call, in a clear sweet voice, brought her dog to her side, whose barking "vexed no more the calm of silent eve."

Helen had not gone far, ere a rustling behind showed she was followed; and, having seen no one else, she concluded her pursuer was the owner of that pair of lustrous and impertinent eyes. Vexed and annoyed at having had an observer of her emotion, and in no humour to play guide to the stranger, and such she concluded was his purpose in following her, she availed herself of a turn in the path to glide behind the trunks of two stately trees,

"That twin-like grew of equal size and shape,"

and persuaded Bran to crouch quietly by her side. In a few minutes she had the pleasure of seeing the stranger pass her retreat, and pursue his way nothing doubting. The next moment she turned into an opposite path, and soon after came in sight of the home of her childhood. As she ascended a rising ground, a horseman appeared in sight just leaving the house, and riding towards her apparently more intent on speed than safety. Her first feeling was vexation, thinking it the stranger, though that could scarcely have been; but a second glance told her it was one well-known and

rarely unwelcome. On he came, his slight blood-horse hardly appearing to touch the ground, so light and winged its motion, whilst the carelessness with which he held the bridle, and the eagerness with which he bent forward, till his forehead almost touched his horse's mane, spoke the eagerness and impetuosity of the rider. Nothing impeded his course. An iron fence was cleared without an effort, or a break in his speed; a deep and broad ha-ha proved as slight a barrier; and, ere Helen had time to tremble for his safety, he had flung his bridle loose, thrown himself from the saddle, and was standing before her with his eyes fixed on her face, and both her hands clasped in his.

A duller eye than his might have seen the traces of tears, and the sight called a cloud to his brow, though her smile of welcome, and her "I am glad to see you, dear Robert," might have banished the cloud from any brow but his. No reception could be more cordial or sincere, and yet there was a something in it that did not please him. Perhaps it was too cordial, too frank; or he was vexed that her ramble had delayed their meeting, though but for a few moments; or he was out of humour with himself, and inclined to lay the blame upon another—no very unusual proceeding with him, or others. To blame her openly for the

delay, he was aware, notwithstanding his usual impetuosity, would be a fatal departure from prudence, certain of reproof; but he might blame her for indulging in melancholy thoughts to the destruction of her peace and health: that was another matter, and such solicitude could only arise from the friendly regard of a cousin.

“Helen,” he said, “I was distressed to hear from Mrs. Hargrave that your good resolutions were all forgotten, and that in spite of her wishes you had left her to indulge unrestrained in sorrowful remembrances; I had missed”—

“Nay! nay! Robert,” interrupting him half-playfully half seriously, and withdrawing her hands from his grasp, “if you chide thus at your first visit, Watson shall say ‘not at home’ at your second. You may find yourself able to keep your good resolutions; I have not always the power. The kind welcome of the villagers recalled the past; but, I hope, I have returned from my lonely ramble better and happier, and if I have wept, surely such a day as this, when a return to a solitary home! must unavoidably awaken sorrowful thoughts, I should have been met with the kind soothing of a friend, not the chiding of a censor. Shall I retaliate, and blame you for being here when you ought to have been installed as an *attaché*

at Vienna, according to your purpose when we parted some time since at Hastings?"

Robert was confused as he met her grave look, conscious he should greatly prefer turning an *attaché* at Hurlestone, and tried to stammer forth something in explanation or vindication; of which the only intelligible words were "intricate diplomacy, detestable policy, and ministerial intrigues." There was a silence of some moments, painful to both, since each saw the sentiments of the other must prove a source of future pain and anxiety; but it was broken by Helen's frankly extending her hand, saying as she did so, "We must not quarrel on such a day as this, but you must ever be to me as you have promised, a kind and gentle brother; so we will have no more disquisitions on good resolutions, but 'Fool it to our humour's bent.'"

Though inclined to quarrel with the emphasis laid on the word *brother*, he found it impossible to resist her sweet smile and sweeter tone, and the extended hand was received as warmly as it was given. Conversing on indifferent matters they soon reached the house, and long ere tea was concluded, the frown had passed away from Robert Euston's brow, and he felt that his cousin's smile could make him forget every thing but his love.

Anxious to avoid all recurrence to the past,

Helen asked him if their neighbours, the Mars-tons, were come down, and what changes had taken place among the inhabitants lately.

“I have half a mind to mislead you, that I may laugh at your mistakes ; you always look so distressed when you have asked a *mal-a-propos* question !”

“Instead of doing that,” said Mrs. Hargrave, “give me a correct sketch of our neighbours, as they are all strangers to me.”

“Pray do not ask him, aunt, for he is the most satirical gossip that ever abused elderly single ladies, or frightened sentimental young ones, or would-be blues.”

“No scandal of Queen Elizabeth, an’ you please, Miss St. Maur ! Do not believe her, Mrs. Hargrave. The truth is, my gentle cousin Helen, despite her demure looks, winning tones, and dove-like eyes, sees, hears, and observes every thing ; and she only wishes to silence me, that she may furnish you with some of her own graphic sketches. I do not dispute her talents in that line, but as I have taken the field first, she must yield me precedence.”

“I have not the slightest wish, I assure you, to dispute precedence ; but, before you begin, allow me to warn my aunt, that the ink you employ is the juice of the lemon ; that your burin is too rarely blunted by good qualities in others, or too much charity in yourself.”

"You are severe, Helen," biting his lips, and inwardly owning the truth of her remark. "What are we to do, if we may not laugh at the follies of our neighbours?"

"Praise their virtues, and throw a pitying veil over their foibles."

"Pick wheat out of chaff, and throw your Chantilly veil over the Atlantic!"

Helen smiled, but shook her head.

"If you will assert, *ma belle cousine*, with unblushing cheek and unfaltering tongue, that you have no taste for the ridiculous, I will never again sketch maid, wife, or widow."

"Boy, bachelor, or dotard?" asked she archly.

"Ha! thou most gentle of reprovers! I suspect half of our quarrel is because I ridicule certain favourites of yours, and that it is but a thing of party after all."

"If you can really assert it to be so, when you recollect the many beardless youths, and bearded senators, old young ladies, and young old ladies, over whom I have thrown my protecting shield, I will allow the truth of your position; and own I did you wrong, when I imagined that, like the barbarians of old, you carried on an exterminating warfare, sparing neither age, sex, or condition."

"I will assert nothing till you have answered my question. Does any thing that approaches

the verge of the ridiculous escape your observation, from the high-flown lengthiness of a maiden speech, to the ultra-exclusiveness of a *nouvelle parvenue*? No turning away; a question I have asked, and an answer I will have."

"I fear I must, in candour, plead guilty to the charge, though rather broadly stated; but I do not own the pleasure of companionship in wrong, and have yet to learn how the proving the guilt of a second person lessens the crime of the first. Moreover, I own my error, and regret it, whilst you glory in your guilt; then even you must acknowledge, that, however strong my perception of the ridiculous, I have an equally strong perception of the good and great."

"Oh, certainly! no one can deny that you combine the good sense and clear observation of Brenda, with the high-souled grandeur of Minna."

"Thanks for your ironical compliment," said the laughing Helen; "methinks I would change cousins to resemble either. After such a speech I must own myself vanquished, and quit the field,

'So now cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!'

—for as for staying the rush of your satire, if your will be set upon it, I might as well attempt



to still the Niagara. I shall study 'Detraction Displayed' in this quiet corner."

"Victory! victory! The day is mine! But do not run away, you may as well study 'Detraction Displayed' from spoken words as from printed ones; and if you will remain I will be as merciful as my nature will admit."

"Then I am to sit quietly by, hear all ridiculed, and defend none?"

"Just so; and now *commençons*. No interruption, if you please, but you may say what you like at the close of my sketches." Then turning to Mrs. Hargrave, "Where shall I begin, Kings, Lords, or Commons?"

"Oh, give rank its due precedence, by all means."

"So it shall be then; and now for the Marston family."

" 'And Murder bared her arm, and rampant War  
Yok'd the red dragons to her iron car; ' "

repeated Helen, looking archly at her cousin.

"Agreed, fair Helen; you have broken the bond of our agreement by this interruption, and I no longer promise to be merciful; not one of your favourites shall be spared, despite that imploring look. First, I shall present you with a full-length portrait of the noble head of the house, Henry James George Edward Beauchamp Alfred, Earl of Marston, of

Marston Hall, in the county of —, Viscount Alfred, Baron Beauchamp of the kingdom of Ireland, one of the members of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, Custos Rotulorum of the aforesaid county, &c. &c. &c. I hope I have not wearied you with this enumeration of half his titles ; but I entertain too high a respect for him and his dignities to think of offending him by omitting any of his distinctions unnecessarily. He is descended, on both sides, from tolerably ancient families, that is, his father and mother can both prove they had grandfathers ; vide Debrett's Peerage, p. 9973 ; though the present Earl's parent was the first of the name ennobled. Whether Mr. Alfred's control of three boroughs, and the wisdom of the votes of himself and nominees, had any thing to do with his elevation, or whether he won the honour by his talents, we will leave for the decision of politicians, suffice it, that the first Lady Marston had not recovered from her almost incredulous surprise on finding herself a Countess ere his present Lordship was born ; born too, in a doubtful time, just as the last stroke that proclaimed the hour of midnight reverberated through the ancient hall, as the novelists would say, so that whether night or day had the honour of his birth, is still a disputed point. Whether this doubtful moment

of his birth had really, as some think, any influence in forming his character ; or whether he owes the being a man of doubts to a large proportion of the organ of cautiousness ; or a descent on the maternal side from the renowned Wouter Van Twiller, as others contend ; or from an early education in the diplomatic circles, I shall not pretend to determine, but I should think, and imagine, and conclude, that one and all of these causes must have combined to make him what he is. In person he is neither tall nor short, fat nor thin, fair nor dark, pale nor florid. His eyes are neither grey nor hazel, but have a greenish tinge something between the two ; his nose neither Grecian, Roman, nor *rétroussé*, but a mixture of all ; his hair neither black, red, nor light, but of a doubtful brown ; most neutrally straight, with a due horror of waving to the right or to the left. His friends arranged his marriage for him, or it might never have been concluded ; as it is said he was doubtful even as he walked up the centre aisle of St. George's. His darling plan is the balance of power ; that source of declamation and deceit from the time of Henry VIII. to that of George VI. and the cause of innumerable alliances, holy and unholy, offensive and defensive ; yet so fearful is he of affording hints to others on this momentous subject, that it is the one

on which he is most scrupulously silent. To make a long tale short, he is one who asserts nothing and doubts every thing, from the mammoth down to the ant. The powers that be, are, in his eyes, 'wisest, virtuouslest, discreetest, best.' Ask his opinion,—he is not aware, he has not thought on the subject, and it is one that requires the deepest consideration. Ask him to dinner, to the best of his belief he has no engagement, but something may occur to prevent his having the pleasure; if not he shall be most happy. Nay, it is said that on a stranger's once asking if he had not the honour of addressing the Earl of Marston, his Lordship looked dreadfully alarmed at such a downright question, and (not till after a great deal of stammering and hesitation) admitted that it was possible it might be so, but that he was not prepared to speak decidedly on the subject, or in the habit of being so closely questioned. With all this no one talks more of decision, and all in his house may be certain of having their due places assigned them, as to seat the hundredth cousin of a viscount below the hundredth cousin of a baron, would, in his eyes, be even a more horrifying event than the Autocrat of all the Russias taking a fancy to a province of the Turkish empire, or entertaining a particular affection for Portsmouth or Plymouth. All these, from his supe-

rior capacity of foreseeing great ends from little beginnings, would alike portend the downfall of the constitution in church and state, the triumph of popery, and the anarchy of Europe. On one point only is he decided,—plead a distinguished precedent for any act, however ridiculous, and notwithstanding his veneration for the aristocracy, he will scarcely allow the power of appeal to rest in the House of Lords; and for a commoner to dispute the point would be rank rebellion—quite a Wat Tyler affair. Now, having disposed of the father to Helen's satisfaction, we will pass on to the son, the young Viscount Alford. His personal appearance is well enough for the eldest son of an Earl, and his talents not despicable. What his father doubts he asserts; both what is and what is not. While his father imagines he determines. His horror of diplomacy and policy is so great, that he refused to try for honours, lest his talents being rendered more clear, he should have found himself forced to comply with his father's wishes, and take a part in public affairs. Obligated to become a member for one of his Lordship's boroughs, his maiden speech was so perfectly undiplomatic, to use a favourite expression of the Earl's, sparing neither side, that with his parent's full permission, or rather at his recommendation, the

next Gazette announced his acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds. Nature made him generous, high-spirited, and honourable ; a contempt for his father's indecision and meanness, and the base intrigues for wealth and power which have come to his knowledge, have rendered him somewhat cynical and satirical in his grave moods, wild even beyond the verge of levity in his gay ones. His talents are wasted in saying lively things and witty criticisms, and he is fast degenerating into a quizzer. Had he applied to his studies, and afterwards exerted his powers of mind for the good of his country, instead of the amusement of himself and triflers far beneath him, his name might have been honoured in the annals of his country, whilst a steady perseverance in the path of duty, and an honourable co-operation with whichever party in the state he might think most worthy, could not have more distressed his wavering sire than the daring truths and bitter sarcasms he now scruples not to utter against all. Acting thus he would have won respect and esteem for himself, and some portion of his own merit would have been reflected on his father, giving him that consideration which he cannot gain himself. As it is, all must regret that one so gifted should have associated early with characters meriting contempt, and that as an

almost necessary consequence, he should now look upon mankind as divided into the cheating and the cheated; those to be laughed at, and those to be laughed with. Under other circumstances, he might have tried to become good and wise, as earnestly as he now tries to be gay and unthinking. He is a moral kaleidoscope, delighting the eye with its variety and brilliancy, but unsatisfying to the mind. How does Helen look, Mrs. Hargave? for Alford is such a superlative favourite of hers, that I dare not even glance her way."

"She looks most triumphant, as she considers you an irresistible pleader against yourself, and hopes hereafter to see you become all that you have blamed Alford for not being," said his cousin.

Mr. Euston turned away to hide his displeasure; and before he could reply to a remark whose justice he felt, Mrs. Hargrave said pettishly, "I wish, Helen, you would not interrupt your cousin, but let him finish the account of our neighbours."

Helen made no reply, and the gentleman had the prudence to continue his descriptions without a reference to the rebuke.

"For fear of wearying you, I will dismiss the rest of this family in a more summary way. My next portrait shall be his lordship's daugh-

ter; one, who under other circumstances, might have been thought by some plain Miss Alford, but now stands both as the fashionable and handsome Lady Catherine Alford. You shall have Mr. Delton's description of her, as I wish to be impartial: 'She is stylish, clever, piquante, would go to the right if ordered to the left; expects flattery, yet half despises it; a warm but indiscreet friend; a bitter but imprudent enemy; and a cool and skilful player with dangerous weapons—the fabled tomb of Mahomet suspended between earth and heaven.' Her mother is almost all that woman should be, only deserving blame for marrying such a bore as his lordship, and for having had too delicate health to control her children.— From Marston Hall let us proceed to Woodbine Cottage, which you must picture to yourself a square bright red brick house, over which the fair and romantic, or to use her own expressions, 'the delicately nerved and exquisitely sensitive Susan Jones has endeavoured for the last nine months to solicit the tender tendrils of the fantastic woodbine to throw its shadow and its perfumed veil.' You must imagine this being of a higher sphere, fat, fair, and fubsy, resting her glowing cheek upon her ungloved hand, and chiding her fidgetty mother, 'that gossip Mrs. Jones,' for teasing her for the key of the tea-



chest, and thus disturbing the delicious reverie, awakened by the tender beaming of the star of eve and dewy mist of twilight. I am no extravagant limner, I assure you, though you look incredulous ; but the dewy mist of twilight has long since passed away I see, and I am keeping you from your repose after your journey. Farewell !

‘To each, to both, a fair good night,  
And pleasing dreams, and slumbers light.’ ”

“Stay, I charge you, at a lady’s bidding. In another hour the moon will be up, and you are scarcely prudent enough to ride in the dark alone ; or rather, rest here to night, and you shall ramble with me to-morrow through my native woods.

“A thousand thanks ! Are you indeed so anxious for my safety, my own dear Helen, faulty as I am ?” and he pressed her hand, whilst his looks said even more than his words.”

“We may wish a brother to be perfect, and yet love him as he is ; not for his faults, but despite them ;” and she withdrew her hand coldly, and then added gaily, “besides, some of my lands are held on your life, and my steward says I must begin to be thrifty.”

"You are too kind ; but, I have an appointment, and must return."

"At least take my horse and groom ; Bayard is too wild for the dark."

"You give yourself too much trouble for one so hateful, Miss St. Maur. I ride on Bayard, and on no other, and require no attendance. Should an accident happen, my will is in your favour, and I have learnt no lessons of thrift."

"Good night ! since it must be so."

He snatched her hand as she turned away displeased, and the tear that stood in her eye calmed him instantly.

"Forgive me, Helen ! I have been vexed and irritated, and not myself to day. You shake your head ; well then, I will be myself no more, but you shall make me what you will. My own groom is here, and I will ride quietly, and come to-morrow and show you I am safe. Are you contented ?"

"More than contented. Once more good night, and remember you dine and sleep here to-morrow. I have a hundred things to consult you about, and a thousand to tell you, and will hope to have the happiness to see you all I could wish."

"Realy Helen," said Mrs. Hargrave, looking

very stately, as soon as the door had closed on their visitor, "I cannot at all approve of your conduct toward Mr. Euston. You seem the only person blind to his virtues."

"You wrong my affection for him, dear aunt; I am fully sensible of all his virtues, or I should not be so anxious lest he allow his faults to overpower them."

"In my time young ladies did not think it decorous to reprove young gentlemen for that for which their elders had allowed them to pass unreprieved: but old customs are changed now it seems. I saw no harm in what your cousin said of Lord Alford, or I should have checked him. And, had strangers been present, they might have attributed your remark to strange motives."

"Alford is too kind to be given up to Robert's jealousy. To defend myself from your open charges, dear aunt, would be useless, as I should still remain wrong in your eyes. Allow me therefore to plead guilty to the crime, of which, in your heart, you accuse me. My affection for my cousin is the warm, open, sincere affection of a sister, and it never can, and, with my will, it never shall partake of another character. He understood me perfectly when we parted at Hastings: why his opinion and conduct have changed since then, perhaps you

can tell, as he may have explained his reasons to you in his letter of last month, or his interview of this evening. I am perfectly innocent of such a change, and deeply regret it. No true friend will encourage hopes which can never be realized, but will join with me in persuading him to follow some profession. To urge him on this point was one of my principal reasons for asking him here to morrow, as well as to show by my open conduct, that we could never be more than relations. You will, I am sure, see with me the propriety of such an active mind engaging in some pursuit; and I hope, ere his visit to us shall have ended, our united persuasions will have induced him to decide on becoming ‘tinker, tailor, sailor, apothecary, plough boy, or thief,’ as the nurses say. Now, aunt, having finished my disquisition, I trust to the satisfaction of both, let me assist you up the slippery oak staircase.”

Either the allusion to the letter and the interview was too home a stroke to be parried, or the playful smile with which she offered her arm was too sweet to be resisted; for the old lady said no more, but kissed her and took her arm.

## CHAPTER II.

Yet, e'en in yon sequester'd spot,  
May worthier conquest be thy lot,  
Than yet thy life has known :  
Conquest, unbought by blood or harm,  
That needs nor foreign aid, nor arm,  
A triumph all thine own.

Such waits thee, when thou shalt control  
Those passions wild—that stubborn soul—  
That mars thy prosperous scene.  
Hear this from no unmoved heart ;  
Which sighs, comparing what thou art  
With what thou might'st have been.

SCOTT.

Je préfère, sans hésiter, l'âne qui porte sa charge, au lion qui dévore les hommes.

“WHAT a gad-about! you are, my gentle cousin,” said Robert Euston, as he handed Miss St. Maur from her little pony carriage the next day about one. “Not at home twenty-four hours, before you start on a round of visits, and cheat me out of my ramble with you. I have been waiting for you these two hours.”

“Your watch goes by steam, I calculate, thou most impertinent of cousins! You were not here at half-past twelve, and I shall be ready in ten minutes. Could I have imagined you so changed as to wish to visit Suky Watts and Jenny Jenkins, I would have waited for you.”

“Thanks, gentle lady! But I hate morning visits, and neither admire dirty children nor smoky huts.”

“No, you never had much taste for the picturesque.”

“How well and happy you are looking, Helen,” said her aunt, or rather great-aunt, for such she was. “Has any thing very delightful occurred this morning?”

“Yes, a great many things.”

“Pray let us hear some of these delightful things.”

“Hear them? Impossible! They are things to be felt, not told. The whole of the village was in an ecstasy at the sight of me. The women curtsied, laughed and cried; the children shouted; the curs barked and wagged their tails; and the very cats purred with delight. Nay, I even fancied the woods looked greener for my presence; and the waterfall greeted me with a softened murmur. They who say the poor are ungrateful wrong them, unless they exempt Hurlestone from the general censure. In

short, Robert, I wanted you there to describe the scene, as you did the delicate-nerved Miss Jones last night."

"Did I describe Woodbine Cottage other than it was?"

"I believe not; but I could not bestow on it the observation it deserved, for a blue-eyed damsel was sitting at an open window below, breathing the balmy air of morn; whilst a pair of twinkling grey eyes, that seemed as if they could see what was, and what was not, surmounted by a cap of novel form, were peeping over the blind at the window above."

"The mother and the daughter! Before the hour of five the former will have tramped over half the county, describing the heiress, and boasting of having had the first sight. So tremble, lady fair! and the latter will have looked you out a lover, and woven the romance of your future fate."

"Are you sure she is not too busily engaged in weaving the web of fate for herself to think of me?"

"Why should you imagine it: has she already been whispering a tale of love into your sympathising ear?"

"No! but I saw her watching a stranger, who, in manners and appearance, might figure as the hero of a romance."

"Whom do you mean?" inquired Mr. Euston rather hastily.

"That is more than I can tell; but Bran seems to have taken a dislike to him, and as he quieted my refractory pony, and insisted on his passing the stream at the end of the village, even I felt there was something rather awful and sublime about him."

"Impertinent fellow! I'll teach him to interfere," muttered Mr. Euston.

"Great impertinence, certainly, most gallant cousin! to assist a lady in distress. The sex will thank you, if you instruct all impertinent strangers, that ladies prefer being overturned in the mud, or drowned in a brook, to having to say, 'Thank you,' for a service done, lest it should chance to displease a moody cousin."

He felt the rebuke, though playfully conveyed, but was little inclined to submit to it.

"You seem to rate his services somewhat highly. Hurlestone brook would scarcely drown, and a slight accident might teach you in future to take some one with you."

"One thousand and one thanks for wishing me a slight accident, and know James had left my pony's side but an instant before to deliver a message. But as my preserver seems no favourite of yours, let us talk no more about him."



“Some strolling player, who enacts Othello in a barn, and stabs Desdemona to the heart with his own hand; some scrawler of rhymes fawning for a subscription; or some destroyer of the human face divine; or dauber of landscapes with red and yellow skies, rich green fields, and bright blue lakes, booing for an order. And to call such a creature your preserver! Miss Jones herself could not say more of him. I suppose he must be fêted at the Park to convince him of your eternal gratitude. Pray let me know his name and abode, that I may—”

“Instruct him in playing the part of Othello? or assist him in writing a sonnet on good temper?” asked she archly.

He coloured, and the cloud on his brow became heavier. She was sorry to see it, as she had hoped her hint to Mrs. Hargrave would have induced that lady to have retracted any encouragement she might have given before; and that his promise of the preceding night would not have been broken so speedily. Both were silent, till Helen said,

“You cannot be sorry, Robert, that I was saved from accident; and, though I called the stranger my preserver, I have no idea of fêting him, or the slightest wish ever to see him again; unless, indeed, you could prove him to

be player, poet, or painter, and then I would willingly purchase his tickets, subscribe to his rhymes, or patronise his paintings, as bound in gratitude. I am now ready for my ramble, and if you can better keep your promise of last night, I shall have pleasure in your company ; but if we can never meet without the chance of a quarrel, I shall be obliged to confine myself to the bare limits of politeness. Am I to have the pleasure of your company or not ?”

He took her extended hand, drew it within his arm without speaking, and in a few minutes they were walking through the wood. The gentleman would have taken the path that led to the village, but the lady said she had been there in the morning, and turned in a contrary direction.

When they returned, it was evident some explanation had taken place between them. The trace of tears was visible on Helen’s cheek, yet were her smiles more free and joyous, and her whole manner to her cousin more frank, more warm, and more endearing, than she had ventured to be in the morning. On Robert’s part, every vestige of ill-humour had vanished, but he looked paler and more melancholy, though evidently struggling to subdue every appearance of sadness ; and his demeanour to Helen, though kind and attentive, had nothing

of the lover-like tenderness of the night before.

Both exerted themselves with success to render the conversation gay and animated; and before the close of the evening, Mrs. Hargrave had the surprise of hearing her favourite announce his intention of consulting Lord Hunsdon, his cousin and one of the secretaries of state, about procuring some official situation.

The old lady seemed as much displeased as surprised at this new arrangement, and spoke at some length against the toils of public men, the intricacies of diplomacy, the intrigues of secretaries, &c. and ended by wondering why he could not remain as he was, as he had a fortune of two thousand a-year at least, and might increase it by marriage; or, if he must have an occupation, let him become a magistrate, or a clergyman, or even a lawyer, and then he might still live near Hurlestone.

He coloured with indignation as he replied, "You know me but little, if you can suppose I would allow sordid motives to influence me in a union which must decide my future fate. Why should you believe me capable of such baseness? As for becoming a magistrate, I have no taste for committing ragged beggars, starving poachers, or crying women. I enter-

tain the horror of a culprit towards 'Burn's Justice,' and the terror of a rogue towards 'Blackstone's Commentaries.' I am too bad or too good to become a clergyman. Too volatile, I fear, to perform the duties of a good minister, and too conscientious to undertake such an awful charge lightly. There may be labyrinths of intrigue, and depths of chicanery, in some political characters; but shame on the heart that could think, and the tongue that will say, Britons cannot be governed by honest men!"

"Mighty fine!" said the old lady, who, besides seeing that she stood alone, could not but be aware that her allusion, situated as the cousins were, was both indelicate and impolitic. "The time may come when you may wish you had consulted the aunt instead of the niece; but old people are supposed to know nothing now."

She left the room as she finished speaking, and Mr. Euston paced the apartment in wrath for some minutes, and then flung himself into a seat in a distant window. His eyes were turned on the lovely prospect before him, but his mind was engaged on other matters, and his gloomy silence seemed likely to continue.

"Dear Robert!" said Helen, approaching him and playfully fanning him with a rose, "do

not let my aunt's words chafe you thus; you know full well her expressions, when angry, are never guarded, and you should not heed them. Think no more of the past, but come and sing with me."

He made no reply, he did not even turn towards her. She spoke still more kindly, and displaced the hand that shadowed part of his face, still he neither moved nor spoke.

"Robert! dear Robert! why is this? If you already repent your morning's plan, there are none to hold you to it."

"I do not repent Helen; but leave me, I cannot brook your contempt;" and he withdrew his hand from her touch, and again shaded his face, but not before she had been startled by his pale and haggard look.

"I cannot, I will not leave you thus. Surely you cannot hold me responsible for the anger of another! And why do you dread contempt from me? Tell me, Robert, for I will not quit you without a reply."

"Then take it," he replied, removing his hand and looking full upon her. "It can matter little that the tongue should say what it wrings the heart to feel. Though your words may not be like your aunt's, are not your thoughts the same? Did she not brand me as base and sordid? and do you not deem me

such even at this moment? Do not deny it," he continued wildly; "it would be in vain, I see it all, and we part to night for ever."

I will not deny it, dear Robert, since you will not believe me. But look upon me, and if you see one shadow of mistrust, then fly me if you will."

He took both her hands in his, and by the light of the pale moon looked deep into her eyes. She did not speak, but as he met her sweet confiding smile, and read in her eyes nothing but kindness, the cold chill of despair passed away, and hope once more beamed upon him.

"I am but a poor wavering creature; the denial I refused so lately, I gasp for now. Those lips never breathed a falsehood. Can you, will you, tell me you never once doubted the purity of my affection?" He grasped her hands more firmly, looked more intently in her face, and scarcely breathed as he awaited her answer. It was given in a firm but feeling tone.

"I can, I will. Should the whole world beside prove base, I could feel no doubt of you."

"Heaven bless you, Helen! now I am a man again. I know I am not worthy of you, and yet I cannot yield you to another; and could not live under your contempt."

"You are more than worthy of any, when

you yield not to passion, and possess all the esteem and affection the fondest sister could bestow; besides, Mrs. Hargrave holds no influence over me."

"So I find to my sorrow! Yet, not so! I would not owe even my happiness to the influence of another, at least not in my better moods; but pass we that, I will not again distress you by referring to that subject, if I can command myself; but you must make allowances at times. Will you proclaim an amnesty for the past, and permit me to advise?"

"Where no offence has been felt, no amnesty is needed. We sovereigns must keep those things for grand occasions. Now speak, and I'll obey you."

"Do not think me actuated by pique then, if I hint at your finding some annoyance from Mrs. Hargrave's becoming a fixture at Hurlestone. Though she has stood my friend till to day, and though I believe she is as much attached to you as she can be to any one, still I cannot but think her ill-tempered, weak, and injudicious."

"Weak and injudicious she certainly is, and not always in good-humour; but I think she is fully aware I have been too long accustomed to act for myself to allow her a hope of ruling me. A temporary embarrassment in her affairs

induced me to invite her here for the summer, in return for kindness shown to my dear mother in former days. As I shall visit some friends in winter, we shall then of necessity separate. I shall certainly act in accordance with your kind hint, as her affairs will by that time be arranged. In the meantime, with a little management, I think I can contrive to keep in good humour, and yet have my own way, which you were once impertinent enough to say was indispensable to my happiness."

"I have half a mind to repeat the impertinence. Your own way you always will have; for you never yield, but quell opposition by the fascinating smile and tone with which your most peremptory commands are conveyed. If I could put you in a passion, I should hope to rule."

"I shall consider all this as complimentary, though rather doubtful, and prove its truth by commanding you to come and sing with me."

Before Mrs. Hargrave returned to the room, Helen had prevailed on her cousin not to allude to what had passed, and the sound of their voices mingling together, had the power to banish all her former ill-humour.

"Do you know the people who are living at my cottage?" inquired Helen of her cousin the next morning, as he was assisting her to arrange some plants in the conservatory.



“ We do not visit, but I have heard of them ; they are a Captain Danvers, his wife, and a tribe of the little Danverses. The Captain is a man who delights in cant terms ; talks little or big according to his company, and is in ecstasies at ragouts and Rhenish, in hopes such ecstasies will again enable him to put his feet under his ‘ friend’s mahogany,’ as he himself expresses it. His lady shows equal discrimination in admiring poodles and pâtés, conserves and conservatories, argand lamps and asparagus ; and deems it so rude to make any difficulty about accepting a present, that it has been said, were any one to offer her an elephant, but hint at the trouble of getting it home, she would say, ‘ Oh ! dear, no trouble at all, she could put it into her bag very easily.’

“ Her eldest daughter is rather pretty, quiet, and pleasing ; the sons great gawky boys, too old to play marbles, too young to play men ; so, generally speaking, playing the fool. Mrs. Jones says, Mr. Douglas, their next neighbour, a sickly East Indian, with a liver complaint, who talks of nothing but mulligatawny, Nullahs, and Punkas ; shews some inclination to appropriate the gentle Emma, and hints that they will soon leave you at liberty to select more agreeable tenants. But then, Mrs. Jones will say any thing. *Parle du diable*

*et il se montre !*" starting up ; " here she comes, and, Helen, you must say, ' not at home,' for I want you to ride with me, and give your opinion of my new lodge."

" ' Here she comes ! and you must ride with me !' Who comes ? and who says I must ?"

" Mrs. Jones comes ; and I never can be in her company, or that of her daughter, without being guilty of some piece of wickedness ; so that, if you have any regard for my morality, spare me the temptation."

" I have no time to discuss the propriety of resisting temptation, rather than from fleeing from it, as she must, I think, have seen us, and I cannot be rude on such light evidence. Why is this aversion of yours ? and is there sufficient reason for refusing her visits ? as I never deny myself on slight grounds."

" She is the widow of the celebrated Doctor Jones, who killed the poor gratis, and robbed the rich to support the widows and orphans of his own making. None but an undertaker could think of patronising his relict. Then, for herself, she is the arrantest gossip in all Europe, and her daughter—"

" ' Stop, Robert, stop ! lest even now  
Your words the bounds of truth o'erflow.'

The memory of such a man as Doctor

Jones throws a radiance around his descendants, and his widow and child must, for his sake, meet with civility at Hurlestone. His skill once saved my father."

"Then, farewell! for once admit her, and there will be no time for our ride."

"A compromise then. Order the horses round in half-an-hour, and my habit shall counsel a brief visit. In the mean time," she added, laughing, "do you entertain the ladies."

As Miss St. Maur was entering the drawing-room in her hat and habit, she was joined by her cousin.

"Is this obeying my orders," she asked, laughing.

"I was too timid to enter the room without your protection, and left your aunt to amuse them."

"On Heaven, and on your lady call,  
And enter the enchanted hall,"

was her playful reply, throwing open the door as she spoke.

The usual bows, curtsies, and introductions having passed, and the company being duly seated, Robert as far from Mrs. Jones and as near his cousin as circumstances would allow, a short dissertation on the weather followed. Notwithstanding the great respect of Mrs.

Jones for the heiress of Hurlestone Park, she could not refrain from fidgetting, and taking surveys of the room and its contents; whilst the reproving looks of the sentimental Susan, the mischievous glances of Mr. Euston, and the sometimes *mal-apropos* answers of the lady heiress, when she chanced to be deeply, though slyly, engaged rating the worth of a silver vase, formed a combination almost too ludicrous for Helen's gravity to withstand. But withstand it she did, most heroically; and played the courteous hostess to perfection, little dreaming of the mischief her prying visitor was to occasion. Having satisfied her curiosity about the inanimate occupants of the room, nearly as much as she could expect in a first visit of a quarter of an hour, she began to speak on what had in effect caused that first visit to be paid so soon; her silly gossiping manner giving importance to what had intrinsically nothing important in it.

"I should not have thought of intruding so soon, before you had been to church either; only I was afraid you might have been frightened yesterday, so I said to Susy this morning—"

"Susannah, mamma, if you please," said the young lady interrupting her, colouring highly as she added, "my darling mamma's total obli-

vion of denominations, is most nervously distressing sometimes."

This was said in an apologetic tone to Helen, who smiled goodnaturedly, and remarked, that Mrs. Jones had doubtless many more important things to think of.

"Indeed, ma'am, you are quite right; for Susy, as her poor dear father used to call her, though she will be called Susannah now, never thinks of every thing. There have I all the trouble about the preserves, and the pickles, and measuring out the sugar and pepper, and giving out the soap and candles, and ordering the dinner, and every thing; and, would you believe it! she has pulled up all the sweetmarjorum, and camomile, and thyme, out of the garden, and will have nothing but useless flowers."

"Miss Jones only shows her wisdom, in following the advice of the immortal Swan of Avon, by 'taking time by the forelock,'" said Mr. Euston, assuming a most sentimental air.

*La belle* Susanna, as she liked to be designated, had penetration enough to perceive that irony was intended, as well as the amusement her mother's detail of family affairs and grievances had occasioned, and to hide her mortification proposed instant departure, on the plea of not detaining Miss St. Maur from

her ride; but Helen, pitying her distress, assured her the horses would be announced when ready, and then paying high yet delicate compliments to her late father, acknowledged her debt of gratitude.

The feelings of the child triumphed over affectation, and Susan's looks and tearful eyes spoke her sense of the virtues of her lost parent. Even Mr. Euston was half ashamed of his conduct. Had they departed then all would have been well, but Mrs. Jones had something to learn, as to depart as ignorant as on her entrance was not to be thought of. Robert's speech puzzled her, as she could neither comprehend how a swan could give advice, or thyme have a forelock; but, finding the riddle too hard to solve, she gave up its solution in despair, and again began her attack on Helen.

"As I was saying, I hope you were not frightened yesterday. I was coming out to ask you to come in, when you drove off. I asked the gentleman if you were hurt, and a few other questions, but he only looked very grand, and would not say who he was, but stalked away muttering something I could not hear. He seemed very close I thought; but perhaps he had good reasons;" and here she looked very mysterious. "Well, I thought, as I said to Susy this morning, it would be but

civil to come and ask if you were frightened, and who the gentleman was?"

"Oh yes!" interrupted Miss Jones, "you cannot think how dreadfully nervous I felt, when I saw your palfrey rear, and beheld the gallant stranger rush forward to your rescue. My whole frame trembled, and my heart refused to beat, when I considered that life or death depended on the next fleeting moment. A cry of rapture escaped me, when I saw you placed beyond the thrill of danger. Then the expression of ardent devotion, that gleamed from his luminous eyes, as you returned your tenderly grateful acknowledgments"—(things which she could neither have seen or heard, but only imagined)—and the enraptured, and soul-absorbing attention, with which he stood gazing after you as you vanished from his sight, must have deeply interested every heart illumined with one ray of sympathetic feeling. I can well imagine what you felt during the whole scene, and I hope he has not suffered from his heroic bravery. Tell me his name, that it may ever live bright in my memory."

"Why Susy," said her mother, "you told me it was Mr. Valentine St. Valorie, an artist, though I said I would ask Miss St. Maur, to make sure."

"I beg your pardon, mamma," replied the

young lady, colouring; "I only said the noble stranger answered to the bewitching description of Valentine St. Valorie, in the 'Unforgotten;' and I had no doubt, from the highly intellectual expression of his countenance, he had a taste for the fine arts."

"Well versed in some of the arts, at least," said Mr. Euston bitterly, as he fixed his searching eyes on his cousin's blushing face, giving to the mysterious look of Mrs. Jones a meaning she had scarcely intended. "Pray Miss Jones favour us with a description of this sublime stranger, as my cousin might be supposed to be partial. Is he tall?"

"Tall! Ah yes! Far above the middle height, of a majestic presence; stately and commanding; a fine roman nose; so pale, so interesting; a mouth like a Grecian statue; eyes whose radiance would be too dazzling, were not their brilliancy shadowed by long dark lashes; above these a lofty brow, over which falls, in wild and graceful disorder, a rich profusion of glossy ebon curls.

' His stature manly, bold, and tall,  
Built like a castle's battled wall,  
Yet moulded in such just degrees  
His giant strength seems lightsome ease.  
Close as the tendrils of the vine,  
His locks upon his forehead twine.  
But 'tis his dignity of eye!  
There, if a suppliant would I fly



Secure, 'mid dangers, wrongs, and grief,  
Of sympathy, redress, relief;  
That glance, if guilty, would I dread  
More than the doom that spoke me dead! ' "

"Oh certainly! I understand perfectly," said Mr. Euston in a still more fierce and bitter tone, as she finished her declamation. "Tall, hook nose, sallow complexion, ebon locks, hawk's eyes. I see it all; I have him before me now; one of Salvator's banditti; a youthful Mahmoud; an ancient Horatius; a superb specimen of the heroic and sublime! In short, one of your Werter sort of fellows, so irresistible among the ladies; Childe Harold the second! If it be not presuming too far, Miss St. Maur, may we request to be favored with the name of this devoted hero of yours. I am dying for an introduction."

Vexed and distressed at the turn the conversation had taken, Helen had hitherto sat silent; blushing and confused, either from the stern looks of her cousin, or from the remembrance of the interview with the stranger; but now Robert's unkind and ungenerous conduct gave her courage to answer his question, meeting his full gaze calmly and proudly as she spoke.

"I am not acquainted with the stranger's name, and only know him as one to whom I am indebted for an act of courtesy and polite-

ness, no gentleman similarly situated would have hesitated to perform. My life was never in danger; but, had it been, I have no doubt he would have been man enough to have endeavoured to save it. Should an opportunity of introduction occur, the stranger's wishes must be consulted."

Mr. Euston's eyes sank beneath the calm reproving look of his cousin, who, to change the conversation, proposed a visit to the conservatory. To this Mrs. Jones and her daughter gladly assented, and soon after took their leave. The horses were announced at the same moment; and to avoid a discussion with her aunt, which seemed likely to ensue, Helen obeyed the summons instantly; and contrary to custom, when Robert was present, was handed to her saddle by the old grey-headed groom. She struck into a canter immediately, and continued riding at a quick pace, till a hill obliged her to breathe her horse. Her cousin varied his pace in accordance with hers, but "spake never a word."

On they rode parallel, but a little space apart, neither uttering a syllable; the one too indignant, the other too angry with himself and others to converse, till the road branched off in two opposite directions—the one leading to Mr. Euston's lodge, the other returning by a cir-

cuitous route to Hurlestone. Helen turned into the latter, and her cousin, after a moment's hesitation, followed her lead for a few paces in silence, but seeing her prepare to increase her speed, he intimated, in rather a surly tone, that she had mistaken the road.

"I have not mistaken the road," she replied calmly, as she continued her way. There was another brief silence, and then Mr. Euston, with a flushed cheek and frowning brow, bade her, "Good morning." "Good morning, Mr. Euston," she replied, bowing gravely, and passed on.

There was a pause, a struggle, and in an instant more he was again at her side.

"How am I to understand this conduct, Miss St. Maur?" and he laid his hand on her horse's rein, and looked full in her face.

"How do you wish to understand it, Mr. Euston?" said the lady, in the same calm tone she had used before, and without shrinking from his look.

"This is mockery, for my wishes have lost their influence. Tell me, is it your intention we should part thus for ever?"

"I have no intention of the sort at present."

"No! you would throw all the blame of the intention upon me. But I can read the riddle. I can see the truth. The companion of child-

hood must yield place to the acquaintance of yesterday. But this upstart shall pay the penalty of his presumption, and shall not win the prize so easily. The introduction you refuse shall be obtained through other means; and ere we meet again he shall have defended or relinquished his claim;" and he flung her bridle fiercely from him.

"This may not be! molest this stranger, and, as you say, we meet no more."

"Ha! is it come to this then? Was the riddle truly read?"

"Is it come to what, Mr. Euston? And how read you a riddle, when there is none to read?"

"If there were no riddle why that blush? The heiress of Hurlestone is no timid country maiden, to colour at a look and tremble at a word; she has been noted for her self-possession. You may look coldly and proudly now, Helen, but you cannot deceive me. You have met that stranger before."

"I have."

"I knew it, I knew it;" and the bridle fell from his hand, whilst his pallid cheek and quivering lip bespoke his agony. Helen was softened; but before she could sooth him his anger broke forth again.

"I knew you had met before. I saw it; I felt it. But you shall meet no more. You may

refuse my love, but you shall wed no wandering beggar."

Helen could not but feel alarm at his wrathful look, but she also felt this was no time to show it; to yield now would be to become the slave of his passions. She felt this interview must decide the point of her free agency: collecting herself, therefore, she replied, in as calm a tone as she could assume,

"By what right, and on what plea would Mr. Euston interfere in my concerns, and how dare he thus heap insult upon insult?"

"Helen! Helen! can you ask such a question in such a tone? Is all that has passed between us thus forgotten? Speak warmly, speak angrily, any thing but that cold and chilling tone!"

"To speak angrily were to bring tempest to tempest; to think on the past were but to dwell on promises made only to be broken, of indignities repented of only to be repeated."

The young man writhed beneath her words and looks, for even in his passion he could not deny their truth. He paused a moment, then laid his hand upon her arm, whilst his cheek changed from pale to red each second, as he said: "Answer but one question! make but one promise!"

"I make no promise, for then I should

keep it; I answer no question, for you have no right to ask it."

"You do right, lady! Oh! that I could but acquire such calm cold prudence!"

"You shall have my best wishes for success in such an attempt."

"Doubtless! it would save you fears for your minion's safety. You will not answer, for you love him! You will not promise, for you will wed him!" and he pressed more closely to her, and grasped her arm more firmly.

"Stand back, sir!" said she indignantly, extricating her arm from his grasp, and backing her horse till the bank, that bounded the road, prevented her putting a further space between them.

"How dare you use such language to me? What levity have you seen in the conduct of Helen St. Maur that you should tax her with yielding heart and hand, unwooed, unasked, to one seen but twice? Where is your promise of yesterday? Where is the manly feeling that should make you scorn to insult a woman? Shame! Robert, shame! You but degrade yourself, not me, by such suspicions. I have borne your reproaches too patiently, or you had not dared to insult me thus; you had not dared, this morning, to waken blushes by your looks, and then give gossips a right to tattle of

my confusion. Your pardon if I guard against such insults for the future. Henceforth we meet but rarely; bring my name still more before the public by seeking this stranger, and the doors of Hurlestone Park are closed against you for ever. Farewell!" She bowed, with flushed cheek and flushing eye; and before he could answer her horse was many paces before him, proceeding at no gentle speed.

It was not the first time he had justly offended his cousin by his violent conduct; but as he had never insulted her so far before, so had he never before seen her so decided and indignant. He had tried to catch her bridle as she passed, but the effort had been vain; and he made no further attempt to stay, or follow her. The warmth and sincerity of her indignation at his suspicions, convinced him of their incorrectness despite that tell-tale blush; and he felt, if innocent, he could never expect her to forgive him. He thought not of his horse; he thought not of standing thus strangely in a public road, exposed to the gaze and wonder of passers-by; he thought of nothing but Helen — of her indignant looks — of her indignant words. He sat pale and motionless on his horse, who, unrestrained, fed on the grass and wild flowers growing by the side of the road. So completely was he lost to all around him,

that he knew not he was an object of observation to any, till a voice close beside him said, "I am afraid you are ill, Master Robert." He started, and then first perceived Helen's grey-headed groom was by his side. The first thought was that Helen had sent him.

"Did my cousin send you to inquire?" he questioned eagerly.

"No, Sir! Miss Helen is on before, but seeing you look so pale, I could not ride after her without stopping to ask if you were ill."

"No, James, quite well!" said Mr. Euston, angry at having asked the question, since the answer had not been as he wished; snatching up the reins as he spoke, and turning his horse's head in the contrary direction.

"Ah, Master Robert," said the old man, who having grown grey in the service of the family, thought himself entitled to take liberties now and then, "it's many's the time I have nursed you, and Miss Helen too, Heaven bless you! and pretty children you was both of you; and this is not the first time I have seen you quarrel: for I am sure 'tis that makes you look so pale. We old folks see a great deal, though we don't say much."

An angry flush and an impatient movement showed that the young man thought the old groom could talk more than enough.



“Now don’t be offended, Master Robert,” he continued; do but ride after my young lady, and say you are sorry, and she will look as sweet as ever. I never knew her refuse to forgive any one in my life; and see, she is waiting for you now on the top of the hill. Now do, Master Robert, do!”

“Peace, fool!” cried the irritated young man, angry at being supposed to be in fault, and that too by an inferior, and allowing passion again to master every better feeling. “Peace, I tell you! If your young lady be offended, she must get pleased again; I am not one to dance attendance on her humours. Ride on! she is waiting for you.”

The servant did as he was ordered in silence, with a reproachful shake of the head, and Robert was again alone. Helen loitered on the hill for her attendant, but before he could reach the due distance in the rear, a horse dashed past him at full speed, and Mr. Euston again rode by his cousin’s side. She took no notice of his approach, but appeared intent on guiding her horse down the steep descent, and nothing but a deeper flush upon her cheek told she was aware of his presence.

Unable longer to endure this silence, he at length said, in a deep and earnest voice, “Helen, can you forgive me?”

Unprepared for such a sudden change of conduct, she checked her horse, looked in his pale face, and then replied in a calm and soft, but melancholy tone, "You have wounded me deeply, Robert; ought you to expect forgiveness?"

"No! and I cannot forgive myself; yet if you knew the misery your anger occasions, you would pity me. I can make no apology for the past; I dare make no promise for the future. I only ask, can you forgive me?"

If his conduct had been more violent than usual, his sorrow seemed in like proportion, and Helen's was no heart to wound unnecessarily one whom she loved, by coldness or distrust; frankly giving him her hand therefore, she said, "I can and do forgive you; and, instead of pledge or apology, trust for the future to your native generosity."

The hand was taken, and warmly pressed; but neither spoke for a few minutes: words were not needed.

"Robert," said Helen, "there is still time to visit your lodge; this short cut will take us thither;" and she turned up a narrow lane as she spoke, which in due time brought them to the building. The lodge being duly seen and criticised, remarks made, and advice given, Helen prepared to return home. The groom

gave place to the cousin in handing her to her saddle, and in gallantry and gratitude he insisted on escorting her part of her way back. After some time, during part of which the gentleman seemed absent, Helen turned playfully to him, saying, "Now you shall hear all I know of the stranger."

"No, no! not one word!" he replied hastily, colouring with shame at her having thus divined his wishes. "Let me show I can keep a good resolution for one day."

"You shall show that by listening; otherwise I see clearly you will still imagine a thousand strange things. The only difficulty is, to know how to make a tale out of nothing. You doubtless guessed that I had visited the churchyard on the day of my return before I met you, and the thoughts of the past came over me as I stood there, and——but that matters not! you can well imagine I was in no mood to wish for an observer, for sad thoughts will come sometimes despite our will: but to my tale. Bran's loud bark disturbed my meditations, and turning towards him, I saw, to my surprise, and at first terror, a black bushy head rising above one of the tombs near me. Vexed at having had a spectator of my weakness, I left the place immediately, and saw no more of the stranger till yesterday, when happening to

pass just as my pony pretended fear of the bridge over the village stream, with common politeness he compelled the refractory animal to obedience. My thanks were as brief as the service required, and here ends what, with wild actors, might have turned out the tragedy of 'The Stranger!' "

This frank and unembarrassed explanation one would have thought must have proved quite satisfactory; but one doubt still remained, and this was not lost on our heroine, who said, "What, not satisfied now? On my word, you are unconscionable!"

"Forgive me! I am ashamed of myself. I had no right to expect an explanation, and your account is quite satisfactory; but—"

"But you are not satisfied. Away with the ugly word, it mars every sentence in which it finds a place. You hear of perfection, and give up yourself heart and mind to love it, and then at the end comes in a 'but,' and you learn your love has been thrown away, and that perfection is not perfection. Give me no more buts then, and you shall ask three questions, if there be need for so many?"

Ashamed to avail himself of her permission, and yet too jealous to act the generous part and decline it, he at length stammered out "Your blush?"

“My blush!” she said, colouring as she answered. “If Robert ‘gave this cheek a little red,’ how could I help it? Have you known me so long, and yet not discovered that, despite all the adulation which, as an heiress, *et par consequence* a beauty, I have received, I have never conquered that very silly and inconvenient habit of blushing? The flatterers say,

‘My mantling blood, in ready play,  
Rivals the blush of early day.’”

“Then the stranger had the impertinence to offer adulation? I thought as much.”

“I should hope my general conduct is such as to warrant the conviction that I should neither receive or suffer impertinence from a stranger, however I may bear with it from a relation.”

“You are severe, but I may not resent your severity, for I deserve it.”

“Then is it not severity?”

“Nay, but you bade me ask a question, and yet give it not frank answer.”

“Ask it again then, if you will be so bold, and my pledge shall be redeemed.”

He hesitated: to decline putting the question he felt would be to take a higher place in her esteem, yet did jealousy overpower his

better feelings, and he again asked, in a hurried tone, and with averted face, what had given rise to her blushes and confusion.

She answered coldly, "Your suspicions and violence."

"And was that all?" he said, in a freer but inquiring tone.

"Mr. Euston!"

"Pardon! pardon, Helen! The thought of this stranger rendering you a service drives me distracted; you think so much of gratitude."

"You wish me to forget all due to yourself, I must conclude, since you persist in such unworthy conduct."

"It is unworthy; I know it; and yet can I not avoid it. Your coldness to my suit—your very perfections, urge me to it; and I cannot resist the impulse."

"Say rather 'will not;' I am no believer in fatalism."

"Word it as you please, the feeling is still the same, Helen."

"And ever must be, if you strive not to curb it."

"They can talk wisely who feel calmly."

"Say rather, they can act wisely who strive earnestly; but it is lost time to bandy words

with you. Farewell! for I must increase my speed to reach Hurlestone by dinner, or Mrs. Hargrave and the cook will grumble."

"Stay one moment; I have not asked my third question, and even I feel, if you depart now, I can never touch on the subject again."

"I am glad you see the impossibility, and will answer, though I am sorry you should require it; but remember, it is the last time you ask, or I answer questions on this subject, refer them to whom they may."

"I may not dispute your will, yet must ask now, for I feel this stranger will prove my rival. How looked he? and what said he?"

"Two questions in one! In good truth you are a thrifty questioner; but my answers will scarcely pleasure you—so do, good Robert, rest contented in your ignorance for once."

"Not so! Not so! How looked he, and what said he? Let me know my fate at once," he continued with vehemence.

"'He that will to Cupar, maun to Cupar,' " she replied, half in anger half in merriment. "The stranger looked as Mr. Euston looks when Miss St. Maur's curls are arranged rather more becomingly than usual; and his words bore import that he considered the day on which he had succoured your poor cousin, as the brightest in his life. There now; said I

not truly that my answer would bring you no pleasure?" she continued, as she marked his contracted brow. It ill suits you to be too curious, as you cannot expect a patent for making civil speeches."

He was angry, ashamed, and for a moment silenced by her arch look and merry answer; she saw her advantage and proceeded, though rather more gravely and earnestly than before.

"Here let this matter rest, and for ever. I am grieved it has been discussed so long, since that discussion has shown me some things in my cousin's temper I had little wish to see. It will prove a warning for the future, and since frankness and confidence have not saved me from suspicion and mistrust, I must henceforth take higher ground, and resist the first appearance of interference. It is true there is no chance of my meeting this stranger again, but remember my words apply to future occasions, though the actors may be different. I will be free to speak and act as I please. It rests with you to decide if we part now as friends."

He liked not her determination; but the assertion of the improbability of her again meeting the stranger; the real kindness of her manner, even when indignantly blaming his



interference, joined to the conviction of his own conduct having been highly improper, made him gladly avail himself of her offer to part on friendly terms, and before he took his departure he stood pledged to a more peaceable line of conduct for the future ; and she in return had promised to take Mrs. Hargrave over the next day to show her his house and grounds.

## CHAPTER III.

Oh! lady dear, fair is thy noon,  
But man is like the inconstant moon;  
Last night she smiled o'er lawn and lea;  
That moon will change, and so will he.  
Thy time, dear lady, 's a passing shower;  
Thy beauty is but a fading flower:  
Watch thy young bosom and maiden eye,  
For the shower must fall, and the flow'ret die.

HOGG.

Nor vice nor virtue has the power,  
Beyond the impression of the hour.  
And oh! when passion rules, how rare  
The hours that fell to virtue's share.

SCOTT.

To make matters more clear, and to free my heroine from a suspicion of acting with more than necessary severity towards her cousin, it may be as well perhaps to recur a little to the past. The marriage of Mr. St. Maur and his amiable and lovely wife, though desirable in a worldly point of view, as healing an ancient enmity, and uniting two adjoining properties, arose wholly and solely from the purest affection on both sides. Their happiness was as perfect as highly religious feelings, a union of mind and

heart, and a congeniality of tastes, could render it. Helen was their only child, and though they were, as might be supposed, most devotedly attached to her; still, if with so much happiness, they dared strongly to desire any thing, it was that a son might be granted to them, to keep up an ancient name, and inherit their large property. The delicate health of both rendered old age an event scarcely likely to occur to either, and having no near male relative on whom they could rely, they felt all the dangers and difficulties to which one so lovely and so rich as Helen would be exposed, should she lose them ere old enough to guide herself. Too sincerely pious to murmur at the denial of their wishes, as each day rendered the possession of a son more doubtful, they applied themselves the more assiduously to fit their daughter for the important station in life it would be her fate to fill. Self-denial, enforced by precept and example, and her being but as a steward, who would be required to give an account of the talents committed to her charge, were the earliest lessons taught her. From her days of childhood, Helen was known to and blessed by the inhabitants of every cottage on her father's estate. Naturally charitable and warm-hearted, benevolence was to her a delight rather than a duty; but she owed it to her parents that her

benevolence was judiciously exercised, and that her charity was founded on the pure motive of love to God, and not on the mere instinctive desire of a warm heart to relieve itself from the pain of beholding suffering. Nor were the sterner virtues forgotten in her education.

To render her firm and decided, where such conduct was fitting, was desirable for one who was likely to stand alone the uncontrolled heiress of thousands; and to be enabled to look into her own concerns, and thus prevent the temptation to speculation in some, or the risk of injustice to others, was no less a duty for one placed in her exalted situation. The quickness of her perception; the enthusiastic warmth of her disposition; the powers of her mind, almost amounting to genius; her unbounded confidence in those she loved; her indignation at every species of oppression; and the strength and intensity of her feelings, rendered her a being who would repay judicious culture a thousand fold; but who likewise stood in need of that culture, to repress, encourage, and amalgamate a thousand-fold more than would a mind of a meaner stamp. The sweetness of her temper, the tenderness of her heart, though precious as native gold, still, like that metal, required the mixture of some sterner alloy to render it truly valuable. This her parents saw, on this they

acted, and it remained for her after-life to prove the good or ill success of their earnest endeavours.

For one so situated and so educated—an only child, an heiress, and a beauty—to be shy and timid, was what could not be, and what in her situation would not have been desirable, if possible; but to make her humble, trusting to a Higher Power than her own, and as far as might be free from vanity, and despising adulation, had been their first and chief endeavour. We will not say that she was perfect, nay more, we will allow that she was not; but, at seventeen, she was a being in mind and person, on whom loving parents might almost dote.

It was about this period that her father's symptoms of consumption became so strong and confirmed as to alarm all who loved him, and to render change of air desirable; and as he was unwilling to leave England, the mild air of Devonshire was recommended and tried. For a time he rallied, and repaid, by the hope of his recovery, the fond and unceasing attentions of his wife and child. But the hope proved false, the disease gained ground, the colour on the cheek grew brighter, and the eyes shone with more than their usual brilliancy. The cheek and the eye of the gentle and affec-

tionate wife waxed brighter in sympathy, and ere Helen had attained her nineteenth year she stood alone an unprotected orphan; for the hearts so closely united in life, could not be parted in death, and the husband and wife slept side by side in the same calm grave. I shall not attempt to describe her feelings, they who have felt such a loss need no description, and they who have not could not understand it. With such parents it is unnecessary to say their last earthly thoughts, their last earthly prayers, were for her; nor need we say of one so good and dutiful, that their advice was treasured up as the rule of her future conduct.

To leave a female so young in full possession of a landed property of upwards of ten thousand a-year, would, under other circumstances, have been as unwise as unusual; but, educated as she had been under this expectation, they deemed it better to entrust her with the charge at once, large as it was, and confide in her prudence, than fetter her with any restrictions. Aware of her anguish at their loss, and unwilling to sadden her young mind, or connect Hurlestone with any painful remembrance, they gave up the idea of resting in their family vault, and by their own express desire were buried in the humble churchyard of the village where they died. Besides this, they won from

her a promise not to yield to her sorrow, but to mingle with others, however painful the first effort might be. Her fragile form, and the extreme delicacy of her whole appearance, had more than once alarmed them lest consumption should yet claim another victim ; and the medical men more than hinted, that the spirit's strife would most probably prove fatal. The promise once given was religiously kept ; and though, in losing her parents, Helen had lost almost all that in her eyes then rendered life valuable, the good seed that had been sown brought forth its fruit, and feeling deeply, she yet bowed in resignation to the stroke. There was another point on which her father had felt and spoken strongly. Robert Euston was the only child of his half sister, who, early left a widow and the guardian of her son, allowed her doting fondness to degenerate into folly ; and, seeing no faults in her darling boy, of course she attempted to check none. Stanmore being only five miles from Hurlestone, Robert spent almost as much time at one as at the other ; and Mr. St. Maur, admiring his many noble qualities, took infinite pains to curb his violence, and give him fixed principles ; but the silly indulgence of the mother marred the wise plans of the uncle, and he grew up, though generous and forgiving, yet wavering,

unstable, and violent in the highest degree. With many virtues, so great was his impetuosity, so violent his passions, that all who loved him trembled too. His could be no even course through life; he might pass from one extreme to the other, tossed to and fro as reason or passion held the temporary rule; but the pole star of religion was wanting to guide him aright. The magnet that could alone pilot him through the rocks and quicksands of the sea of life, was to him as yet an undiscovered thing; at least, if its powers were known they were unfelt.

Brought up so much with his cousin they were as brother and sister, and next to their parents each was the person most beloved by the other. To this feeling they had no objection, and saw with pleasure that Helen's gentle yet firm temper gave her the rule over her cousin, sometimes even in his wildest moods; but they were too anxious for the happiness of their child not to see, that, when the girl should pass into the woman, and the boy expand into the man, the quiet affection now subsisting between them might melt into a warmer feeling. Besides that, they wished no closer union between cousins; they felt that their nephew's temper would risk the happiness of any woman connected with him, however



tenderly he might be attached to her, and it rested with the future to decide his character for good or ill. With such ideas on the subject, and with a vague fancy that they could even then trace in Robert's conduct the dawning of a more tender feeling, Helen received from her parents, but a short time before their death, earnest warnings and strong advice as to her future behaviour. Whilst they left her free, should time or any alteration in Robert's character make her feelings towards him other than that of sister, and only stated their disapproval of a marriage between cousins as an objection and not a prohibition, they still urged her to consider well ere she should unite her fate to one so vehement and unsteady. It was from a consideration of these defects in his disposition, that, though her nearest relative, they gave him no charge to watch over the interests of their child, as they saw he was neither a safe guide or wise counsellor; and bade her rather trust to her own sense and fortitude, or the advice of older friends, in all affairs of importance, than by appealing to him, sanction his control. "Helen," said they, we know you will not marry an immoral man; but beware how, relying on your own sweetness, you allow yourself to be dazzled by brilliant qualities, and unite yourself with a violent

temper. Who shall stay the tide of passion ! Not the arm of man ! not the smile of woman ! and the habitually passionate man is no christian. Genius and heroism may dazzle for awhile, but if they have no firmer basement, and no purer hope, than the power of man's proud mind, or the yearnings of man's proud heart for popular applause, rule, or wealth, they are but little better than the comet's glare ; and woe to those who come within its influence." She listened to this advice, as she did to all from those she loved, with delightful attention ; yet, it must be owned, she thought it would prove unnecessary ; as judging from her feelings, she saw no probability of Robert's ever being to her other than he was then. Unhappily for her, time showed the advice had not been vainly given ; and within a year after the death of her parents, she found it necessary to assert her independence. At first, without hinting his own wishes, he allowed his jealousy of all who approached Helen under the age of fifty, and even some above, to shew itself in satirical remarks and affronts ; so that, despite all her prudence and perfect indifference to the crowd who surrounded her, she was more than once on the point of becoming the innocent cause of a quarrel.

At first she remonstrated in gentle terms,

then more strongly ; till, finding entreaties and remonstrances alike vain, and indignant at the little regard he showed for her delicacy or feelings, she threw off the yoke to which he would fain have subjected her ; and, veiling her fear of his threats under the appearance of firmness, she insisted on her right to act as she pleased, and hinted at being obliged to decline any further communication with him, should he persist in his present improper line of conduct. It was then, that staggered by her firmness he openly avowed his love, and pleaded his cause with unmanly and ungenerous violence.

Shocked at finding her worst fears realized, and alarmed at his fearful threats against any one who should obtain her hand, she refused to listen to his protestations of affection, and left the room.

In vain he called day after day ; she refused to see him ; till, hearing she was ill, in an agony of shame and repentance, he sent her the most ample apologies for the past, and the most unbounded promises for the future. The apologies and the promises were accepted, and to outward appearance the feelings of the cousins were as before ; but each had learned a lesson, and each put that lesson in practice. The gentleman showed less violence in acts and

words, if not in feeling ; and the lady was vigilant to check the slightest interference.

This calm was not to last long. Robert could only exist in alternate storm and shine ; and poor Helen found, that even the possessor of ten thousand a year could not pass through life without some vexations. One day he would be all she could desire ; the next, not a gentleman could approach her without a chance of insult ; and then again he would introduce every one they met, apparently to mark their first impression. Again she spoke firmly and decidedly ; and again the gentleman promised, and for a short time kept his promise ; nay, in compliance with Helen's persuasions, or won by the bright eyes of Lord Hunsdon's niece and his own third cousin, he consented to accept his lordship's offer of an official situation. It was in the hope and belief that he would, by winning her cousin, free her from all further importunity, that Helen bade him adieu a short time before her return to Hurlestone. Great therefore was her surprise and disappointment at finding such hope was vain.

His manner at their meeting was sufficient instantly to show the change in his views and feelings since they parted, whilst the way in which he spoke of Lord Alford in the evening, made it clear to her experience his lordship

was at present the object of his jealousy. It was then that remembered hints from Mrs. Hargrave convinced her she owed the present annoying change to that lady. Having hoped never to be subjected to his violence again, she was the more hurt and wounded at his unmanly vehemence, and again dreaded the future.

His conduct about the stranger distressed her more than she could understand, or probably would have liked to have told; and her indignation was in proportion. What rendered his conduct the more galling and unpardonable was that, when the jealous fit was off, he would amuse himself with the beauty of the hour, and she sometimes doubted whether an apparent compliance to his wishes would not free her from his importunities: but to this Helen could not, and would not stoop; and she had only to hope, that some eyes brighter than her own might succeed in releasing her from further inconvenience. Hitherto, from her perfect indifference to all pretenders to her hand, his outrageous behaviour had only pained her, as exhibiting the errors of his character, and placing her in more than one awkward situation; but this indifference might not always continue, and what simply pained now, might agonize then. Sorry to be obliged to treat with coldness and apparent severity one to whom, despite all

his faults, she was sincerely attached, she was delighted to hear, when she took Mrs. Hargrave to Stanmore, that urgent business would call him to town the next day, and detain him there some time ; but what delighted her still more, were his voluntary and reiterated assurances of shame at his violence of the preceding day, and his renewed promise of seeking to procure some situation through Lord Hunsdon's interest. Need it be said, the cousins parted friends ; and again Helen hoped peace for the future ?

When the carriage had driven off, Mr. Euston flung a sovereign to James, who was in attendance, saying with a flushed cheek but a light laugh, " Your advice was good, my friend, but he stands in peril who would guide a wild bull."

The honest old man thanked his favourite with tears in his eyes, and hoped he should yet live to dandle another Master Robert. Whether Mr. Euston's good humour had any thing to do with having received proof, as he believed, of the departure of this dreaded stranger from the neighbourhood, we will not trouble ourselves to enquire ; nor whether this same stranger ever occurred to Helen's thoughts during the day. We will leave both questions to be decided by those who pique themselves on being able to see farther into a millstone than their neighbours.

We hate explanations ; so one more, and we shall have done. It has been seen that Mrs. Hargrave's first wish was to bring about a marriage between the cousins ; and, should any one ask the reason, we must answer, that which influences a full half of the world—love of self ! In that case she trusted to living with the young couple. Failing to accomplish this union, her next wish was to keep Helen single, under the idea of residing with her. That the hope will, in either case prove fallacious, may be guessed from what has been said ; but, in the meantime, the old lady will doubtless plot and hope.

## CHAPTER IV.

His was the port—the distant mien—  
Tha tseems to shun the sight, and awes when seen ;  
The solemn aspect, and the high-born eye,  
That checks low mirth, but lacks not courtesy.

BYRON.

With reverence be it spoken, I will try  
To overcome the lightness of my nature ;  
Our course you know, is generally zig-zag.

*Ignis Fatuus.*—FAUST.

THE library at Marston Hall was, in its noble owner's opinion, all that an Earl's library should be. That is, there were books in handsome bindings; the writings of every Lord who had deigned to write from the time of Noah, down to that of George IV., save some few, whose opinions his Lordship thought, or imagined, had been a little (a very little) too strongly expressed. To mention any of these rejected addresses was painful to the Earl, who possessed that high-minded *esprit de corps*, that would fain to be blind to the peccadillos of the peerage, be the sinner Whig or Tory. Nor



were the distinguished works of many commoners absent. But the books formed not the half of the excellencies and attractions of this temple of study. There were gold inkstands, and bronze inkstands, and china inkstands; flanked by portfolios of scarlet morocco, and purple morocco, and green morocco; resting on tables, to give an accurate account of whose shapes might have puzzled the most learned geometrician; some with three legs, and some with one leg, and some with no leg at all. Here a richly ornamented easy chair, filled with air, moved, at the slightest touch, from one side of the apartment to the other, with the gentle but rather hurried motion of a flattered member of opposition gliding into a ministerial measure; and there its ponderous and old-fashioned rival, immoveable as the prejudices of fourscore, seemed frowning in contempt on its modern neighbour's facility of movement, and airy love of change. These two chairs might pass as models of the old and new schools, now waging sometimes cruel, sometimes playful warfare: but we will leave it to wiser heads and graver pens to reconcile or elucidate the difference between them, only hoping, as all true patriots should, that the wisdom of the old will calm the vivacity of the young, and the activity of the young impart fresh vigour to the old.

Having no auctioneer's list at hand, I shall omit the description of couches, *réposoirs*, *chaises longues*, &c. that encumbered the room, with its various other ornaments of fanciful steps, busts, casts, &c. and pay my devoirs to the occupant of the recess of one of the large sash-windows, composed of twelve enormous panes of plate glass; for being completely a modern mansion, Marston Hall boasted neither oriel or casement, stone mullion or tracery.

An elegant muslin curtain shaded the window, lest, as Lord Alford said, the light of nature should put out the light of science, or unravel the depths profound of political intrigue; and shadowed by its folds, lounged on an airy couch Mr. Percy Dormer.

Have words been wasted on chairs and tables, and shall no speech be found to tell of Percy Dormer? the talented! the brilliant! the dazzling! the cynosure of bright eyes! winning even by his stateliness. The admired of all admirers; the embryo *premier*; the heir of the earldom and estates of his uncle the Earl of Trevanian? Not so! As Sir Thomas Lawrence might have delighted to paint him, of course I shall find pleasure to write him.

His stature was six feet three, but of such manly proportions, that his great height was only remarked when brought into comparison

with others. His pale complexion contrasted strongly with a profusion of glossy black hair, whose well yet negligently arranged curls, showed that, if he could have stooped to have exhibited anxiety about his personal appearance, it was there his pains would have been employed. But in truth there was not one particle of puppyism about him. He seemed to act up to Lord Chesterfield's advice, "Despise dress, but do not show your contempt for it." Every thing about him was gentlemanly and elegant; nothing foppish or trifling.

His dark penetrating eyes, "that wad'na let a body be," shadowed, yet scarcely softened, by lashes as dark as the eyes themselves: The fine aquiline nose, with its expanding nostrils; the thin, curled, and strongly defined upper lip; every feature, every movement, told of a lofty spirit, and of a mightier ambition than the being considered the most fashionable, the best drest, or the handsomest man in England. His great personal beauty set upon him like the robe of an ancient statue in light and graceful ease: a thing belonging to, and yet unthought-of by the bearer. A brilliant imagination might have fancied him an antique statue modelled by the most skilful art, and animated by the Promethean fire of ambition.

The Times, containing a long and interesting

parliamentary debate, had fallen at his feet; a clever political pamphlet lay open before him, half concealing one of the most brilliant passages in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*; but the pamphlet, though open, was turned topsy-turvy, and a glance served to show that politics held no part in the present thoughts of this highly-gifted personage. His age appeared about twenty-seven; his attitude was thoughtful; his eyes were turned on outward objects, but his thoughts followed not the same direction. A slight but transient flushing of the cheek, and a light contraction of the brows spoke a mind not quite at ease.

At length he made a rather sudden movement, as if to rise, and at that moment Lord Alford burst unceremoniously into the library.

“Dormer,” said he, “I have ordered the horses round directly, and we will have a gallop to put me in a good humour again.”

Mr. Dormer, who had half risen, calmly re-seated himself, apparently by no means pleased at the proposition; and told his friend he had better take his gallop alone, as, not having finished a pamphlet of which Lord Marston had requested his opinion, he could not accompany him.

“Never mind the pamphlet. Some silly political thing I suppose, to prove by demonstration plain—

‘ That the ins should be out, and the outs should be in.’

What is it?” approaching the table as he spoke. “Just as I said,” he continued taking it up, “and read as it should be, backwards I see. Throw politics to the dogs! and now come with me quietly, for it would be useless to pretend any longer you had been reading this trash.”

His friend’s pale cheek flushed with displeasure, and for an instant he looked confused, but immediately recovering himself, replied: “the pamphlet is a very clever one, throws light on the subject concerning which it treats, and if you—”

“No more, Dormer, an’you love me! I have just patiently endured one lecture on politics, and another would quite annihilate me. Ay, you may well look surprised at my having patiently endured such penance, but what could I do? My good mother thinks I may as well enact the part of politician as that of idler; so to please her, I promised to think about it; nay, after some debate I consented, like a good boy, to listen to papa’s arguments on the subject for one quarter of an hour. Not that I had the slightest intention of becoming your rival for the premiership, I assure you, or doing any thing more than think of the matter; but, to quiet my mother, I played politic for

once, and, having suffered the penalty, shall forswear policy for the future. As my evil star would have it, just before this appointed conference took place, a letter arrived to announce that the most immaculate town of T—— had to deplore the untimely death of Mr. Penton, one of its pure and patriotic members; that is, a gentleman who had spent thousands to come in, and then always voted for ministers, ‘were they black spirits or grey;’ conscientiously of course. Further, the precious epistle stated, that as only one gentleman had offered himself, and only two others were talked of, there was no doubt, if I started with the determination to promise and pay sufficiently, that I should prove the successful candidate. Well might they call his death untimely! but there are some people who never do any thing at the right moment. This was making it a closer argument than I had reckoned on, as my wise papa finds his other members so easy to manage, that he thought he might undertake the tutelage of another; and perhaps the vision of a marquissate floated before him. However, I listened eighteen minutes and a quarter; fifteen, to keep my promise to my mother, and the other three and a quarter because I could not extricate my coat from his grasp before.”

“ Well! and you stand for T—— ?”

“Do you take me for a fool, or a madman, Dormer?”

“Can none but such characters represent their countrymen?”

“He must be both combined to stand a contested election.”

“I thank you,” said his friend smiling, who had been returned three months before for the town of D——, after a violent contest of eight days, and at no slight expence. “What said your father?”

“Turned, fidgeted, and fretted—hoped, believed, and imagined.”

“Hush, Alford! remember you speak of a parent.”

His friend blushed at the rebuke. “Right, Dormer, but what can I do? If my father would but be an open foe, or an earnest friend, an outrageous Tory, or a violent Whig, I could respect him for sincerity at least; but, trimming and shifting! My bark should outride the storm, or sink with every sail set.”

“Who would be the fool and the madman then, Alford? Take care how you confound prudence with policy.”

“I should scorn the man, Dormer, who uttered such a sentence, were he one shade less noble and disinterested than yourself: but you know too well my father’s conduct is politic, not prudent.”

Mr. Dormer was silent for a moment, as he could not, and therefore would not deny the truth of the assertion, he then said:—

“But if your father will allow you to enter Parliament free and unshackled, why not run the race of honour? Come, Alford! let us sit side by side at St. Stephen’s as we have done at St. Mary’s.”

The hands of the friends met with a fervent grasp, and the eyes of both glistened.

“It may not be, Dormer,” said his friend softened; “it may not be. Such conduct on my part would but occasion more disputes between my father and myself.” Then his wild mood broke forth again, and he continued as reckless as before. “What will become of your Utopian scheme, when I tell you, no sooner had my silence given my father reason to fancy I might become an M. P., than instead of leaving me unshackled, he began to counsel the embryo member how to be absent at one time, present at another; now to swell a majority, then to increase a minority; when to smile, and when to frown. I had rather be the veriest idler that ever cumbered the earth, than, under the mask of patriotism, sell my country for vanity or gold.”

“How ended the conference?”

“Why, well nigh in my committal for high



treason. A command was issued that I should become a member for T——: I acquiesced, and begged to state what would be my two first motions, unmindful of his horror at any thing so decided. Aware of my own deficiency; and indeed convinced by observation, that a wise son seldom succeeds a wise father, and yet deeming whilst a Lower House should exist an Upper one a necessary balance, I should move that the House of Lords, and indeed the whole peerage, should henceforward be elective instead of hereditary. If defeated in thus ensuring wisdom to the legislators of the land, considering that the government of one fool would be less oppressive than the government of many, as in the former case at least there would be unanimity, I would move that both Houses should be swept away, and his most gracious Majesty be requested, Sultan-like, to reign without control, and that magna charta, habeas corpus, and the bill of rights, should be burnt at Smithfield, and an order in council issued to obliterate their memory.”\*

“What said he to this?”

“Oh! I left him, ere surprise and horror

\* This was written long before the French had even hinted at agitating the question of doing away with an hereditary Peerage. Of course, Lord Alford is alone answerable for the wild folly of his jest.

could permit him speech. As the door closed after me the storm burst forth, but so incoherent from its violence that I could distinguish nothing but lese majesty, sedition, and rebellion; high treason, the Tower, and beheading. And now I have half a mind to start for T—— instantly, win over the electors, take the oaths, and make my motions, ere my father can well know I am an M.P. Methinks then I should be free from all further persecution. What say you, Dormer? will you come and canvass for me, second the motion, and then soften the dreadful news to my father?"

"Willingly!" said his friend, no longer able to control his mirth, at the idea of Lord Marston's dismay. Alford joined in the laugh, and in a moment the cloud passed from his brow, and he was the same light thoughtless being as before.

"Well, Percy, let us discuss the subject during our ride, for I do not wish to encounter the Peer again just at present."

Dormer hesitated, and then said: "Tell me which road you take, and I will meet you, for I cannot conveniently ride with you yet."

"Why not? Never mind the pamphlet, you can give your opinion of it just as well without reading it. Only listen to all my father says, and deal in general or rather complicated

terms, and you will pass for a clever critic. What more objections? Are you anxious to run another tilt with my wild and wilful sister? who, like the merry monarch,

‘Never says a foolish thing,  
And never does a wise one.’

Or are you inclined to hold a discussion on morals with my lady mother?

“For shame, Alford!”

“Well, then! I’ll make amends, and say my dear mother is all that woman should be, and dsserves a better son. And you prefer that horrid *brochure* to riding with me? Adieu then, for I hear the Earl’s aristocratic tread in the passage, and the sound conjures up the sea of heads below, and the axe of the executioner gleaming above.”

What Alford’s entreaties could not effect, was gained by the horror of a political dissertation from his Lordship, and Dormer signified his assent to the ride.

“No thanks!” said his friend archly, attributing his compliance to the right cause: “but follow me, or we shall be too late; a moment more, and I shall be committed to the Tower.”

He rushed to the window as he spoke, and leapt out, closely followed by Dormer. Too eager for flight to be very courteous to any impediment in their path, one or other of the

young men, in his passage to the window, came in violent contact with the moveable chair mentioned before, and dispatched it on its travels with no common force. Away dashed the chair across the room, overturning in its progress two small tables, with their inkstands, &c.; putting one or two other pieces of furniture in motion, and never staying its riotous course till Pitt and Fox, Wyndham and Sheridan, thrown from their pedestals lay side by side upon the floor. The Earl opened the door just in time to hear the crash, and see the guilty author of this mischief standing quietly and demurely against the wall.

The grief and horror of the Earl at such sacrilegious devastation, deprived him of utterance. The fall of those master spirits could portend nothing less than the destruction of the constitution, the downfall of church and state, and the complete confusion of all former political opinions and sub-divisions. Who could be the author of such a fearful crime? A loud laugh, and a clatter of horses' hoofs drew him to the window in time to see his guest and his son riding across the park at full speed, and clearing every impediment with the ease of eager sportsmen.

As the Earl of Marston is never in our opinion a very delightful companion, even when in

good humour, now that he is in rather an awful mood, we will leave him to recover his dismay as he best can, and accompany the horsemen on their excursion.

“Why did you decline riding with me, Percy?” asked Alford, as after a long gallop they allowed their horses breathing time. “I am not so blind but that I could see something more than common in your refusal. Confess!”

“I am not philosopher enough always to have my inclinations under my own control,” said his friend, rather angrily and haughtily, hoping to end the conversation.

“Oh! I cry your mercy! if you mean to rage. I am too cowardly a seaman to seek to weather Cape Wrath; but ‘I thinks what I thinks!’ as old Jane Smith says,” looking sly and mischievous as he spoke.

“You and old Jane Smith may think what you please; but, wild as you are, even you must feel there are times when one would rather be alone.”

“Humph! a polite hint delicately conveyed! But are you sure you wish to be alone? quite alone? Ah! a blush on Percy Dormer’s cheek! Why such a thing is more rare and precious than the great diamond of the Queen of Portugal. No denial! no protestations! I know a

blush when I see it; and when Mr. Percy Dormer looks red, other men should look white. But what is the matter," he continued, looking more earnestly at his friend's angry and confused countenance. "I never knew you so annoyed at my wild badinage before. Has any thing really happened to distress you? tell me and I will cease instantly."

"Nothing particular," replied his friend in a hurried yet rather softer tone; "but my head aches, and I wish to be alone. Which way are you going?"

"Oh! only a headache! and you wish to be alone! two rather suspicious symptoms. Save that I am convinced no mortal could be found to satisfy Percy Dormer's fastidious taste, I might imagine Romeo had found his Juliet; and, now I think of it, I fancy it must be so; for Miss Juliana Waitman assured me yesterday, when I rode over to escort you to Mars-ton, that she really believed you were in love; for you wandered about all by yourself, sighed most piteously, and read all the tender pieces in her Album. Now these proofs are conclusive. Who is the sighed-for mortal or spirit? Egeria or Undine?"

"Nonsense!" said his friend angrily. "What could Miss Juliana Waitman mean by talking about me? or what can you mean by repeating such folly?"

“What, indeed! as I told her. You are a person to be admired and revered, but never talked of. ‘Oh, no!’ she said, sighing, ‘she felt that;’ and you reminded her of some of Byron’s heroes: Lara, or Giaffar, or Conrad, or Don Juan, or Beppo, or some of those, I forget which.”

“Alford,” said his friend still more angrily, though scarcely able to forbear laughing at the enumeration of heroes to whom he bore resemblance, “which road do you take? for I choose to ride alone.”

“Such a brilliant thought has just entered my head,” replied his friend with provoking gravity. “You shall be king of Greece! the very person for it! That frown would tame into submission Capo D’Istria, Mavrocordato, Botzaris, Canaris, and Robbelina herself: nay, I verily believe, one look would annihilate the Sultan Mahmoud, and demolish the Holy Alliance.” Mr. Dormer’s horse was reined back violently, and then urged to various curvetings, to conceal and dispel his rider’s ill humour.

“Which way do you take?” he repeated at length, in a stern and repressed voice. “There has been more than enough of this folly.”

“So it seems; seeing you have allowed it to ruffle your temper. I take this road, as I have a note to deliver from my mother; and if you will

accompany me, you shall have an introduction to one of the lions or lionesses of our neighbourhood: a lady under age, rich, lovely, and amiable!"

"I detest heiresses! They balance the merits of others in golden scales, and are themselves only fit to be sold to a goldsmith by weight. Though Gorgons, yet gilded by their riches, younger brothers and politic papas, hold them possessed of a hundred thousand charms; if really beautiful so much the worse; a woman's head, or rather heart, might by chance withstand the dangers of riches or beauty; but, united, there is not one could remain uncontaminated by the flatteries she would receive. As to Amiability, she is but a handmaid in the train of Riches and Beauty, or a hacknied word to be used when no other presents itself. I will have no introduction; there is your road, and we meet again somewhere on this; or each finds his way home as he can."

"Whew! what a tirade against heiresses! Now would I wager my wisdom you have been refused by the plump daughter of some wealthy cit. You shall have no introduction from me, I assure you; and beware! there is not a young man in all the shire would allow your remarks to remain unnoticed, if he knew they applied to Miss St. Maur. For my part I love



Helen as a sister, and will never stand by patiently and hear her abused ;” so saying, he put spurs to his horse, and left Dormer to recover his good-humour.

“My young lady has driven out with Mrs. Hargrave, my lord,” was the answer at Hurlestone to Lord Alford’s question, “Is Miss St. Maur at home ?”

“Then perhaps I shall meet her on my return ; if not, give her this note, and say I am sorry not to have seen her.”

“Yes ! my lord ;” and away rode his lordship.

“How glad I am to see you, Helen,” said Lord Alford, as he met her carriage on his return to Marston ; “do walk up this hill with me, for I have a thousand things to say to you.”

She complied instantly with good humoured readiness, and enquired kindly after his family.

“My mother, I am sorry to say, is as great an invalid as ever ; and Catherine has a sore throat, which, though it prevented her calling on you to-day, has not tamed her in the least. My father is in a rage ; with or without reason, I shall not take upon myself to decide.”

Helen shook her head, but could not forbear smiling at his ludicrous account of the morning’s fracas.

“And now, Helen, you really must come to

Marston, and put us all in good-humour. My mother and Catherine are too unwell to visit you, but send their very best love, with a request that you will come to us on Monday, and remain till we have wearied you."

"Is this true?" asked she laughing; "for you recollect, you have ere now shown a talent for inventing pretty messages, and I am not inclined to play the part of the 'Uninvited.'"

"Will you never forget or forgive that prank of mine? But I am really and truly the bearer of such a message now, so do not deny me."

"Very well then; tell your dear mother I shall be with her on Monday, but must return on Saturday. It is so long since I have seen her I shall quite dream of my visit."

"Victory! victory!" cried he, waving his hat.

"What do you mean? I favour no tricks."

"There is no trickery; only my sage mother and mad-cap sister had the impertinence to declare you would not come on my bidding, so insisted on loading me with a note, which I left at Hurlestone lest I should not meet you; but now I shall have the triumph of announcing you come on my invitation alone."

"And more; you may tell them I will come on your invitation any day, for I have not forgotten that you were always my protector and defender in my childish days."

He pressed the hand that rested on his arm, as he said, "Thank you! Helen; believe me you shall never find your confidence misplaced. Wild and reckless as I may be to others, you shall find me a steady and perhaps not unwise friend, though it is Alford who says so. I know all the folly of endeavouring to win a warmer interest in your regard, and shall not attempt it; but you must in return ever look upon me as a brother, for Euston is at times too violent to be a safe counsellor."

"And thank you, my new brother but old friend;" said she half playfully, though the tear glistened in her eye as she spoke.

There was a short silence till they reached the top of the hill, and then she said: "Now I think of it, suppose you play courteous and invite my aunt. I know she will decline, but the invitation will please her."

"Willingly; but you will come still."

"Oh yes! we are no tie on each other; indeed she often prefers being left. I hope your house is not full, as usual, for I want to have your mother all to myself."

"We have no visitors but a friend of mine, Percy Dormer."

"What the person you used to rave about? till I dreamt a second time there was such a thing in the world as a perfect man."

“The same; but I rave about him no more, for he positively refused to be introduced to you, and declares he detests heiresses.”

“Alas, poor me!”

There was no time for further explanation, as the carriage came up at the moment. The invitation to Mrs. Hargrave was given, and declined, with courtesy on one side, gratified pride on the other; Helen was handed into her carriage by Alford, and the next moment it drove on.

As he stopped and looked round for his friend, he saw a horseman on the summit of an opposite hill coming quickly in a direction to meet the carriage. “It must be Dormer,” thought Alford, and he lingered to watch his approach. The horse dashed down that hill and up the next, proving the recklessness or speed of its rider, and met the carriage half way up the ascent. Could he be mistaken? It certainly was Dormer; but he and Miss St. Maur were strangers to each other; yet, as he had nearly passed the carriage, a start and curvet told of some sudden emotion; and, to his utter astonishment, a low and profound bow from Dormer succeeded.

The carriage proceeded rapidly. Dormer stopped his horse, and looked after it, whilst Alford dashed down the hill to learn the meaning of this, to him, strange scene. He reached

his friend just as he was in the act of following the carriage.

"No! no! Percy," laying his hand on his arm, "you have had enough of riding alone for one day. Why you look wilder than ever! What is the matter?"

"Nothing! but I must follow that carriage, and stop it."

"What Percy Dormer! the refined! the lofty! the elegant! turned highwayman. Leetle Paul, or Turpin, or Jonathan Wild! Well, this will make a pretty tale. Let me see, 'Percy Dormer, or the Gentle Bandit.' A romance in three volumes, by ——."

"Let me pass!" said Mr. Dormer, interrupting him, and trying to free himself from the firm but friendly grasp.

"Not I, indeed! those ladies are under my protection, and I cannot think of allowing them to be robbed of their rings and watches."

"Folly!" cried his friend, fretfully and angrily; then recollecting himself he added: "but you can tell me, for I saw you speak to them. Who is the lady in that carriage?"

"The one you bowed to?"

"Of course?"

"Mrs. Hargrave."

"Mrs. Hargrave!" repeated Dormer, laying great stress on the first word, and turning

away. "Is she a widow?" he asked again in an earnest voice.

"Ah! sits the wind that way," thought Alford; "since he will not trust me, it shall go hard but I find or make some sport. "Yes, she is a widow," he replied carelessly; and then, marking the sudden pleasure expressed in his friend's manner, he added archly: "and if you feel inclined to woo and wed, I'll be your bridesman; though I never could have believed Percy Dormer would have chosen to be second to any man: *mais chacun à son gout.*"

Man of the world as he was, Mr. Dormer's cheek flushed crimson, whilst he turned his horse's head, and proceeded towards Marston at a brisk pace, to avoid all further conversation on the subject; but Alford, seeing there was some mystery in the affair, was not inclined to let the matter rest; and, as they walked their horses up the next hill, he endeavoured to learn more.

"By the way, Dormer, I fear you must meet this detested heiress, as she comes to us on Monday; but you shall not be introduced."

"There will be plenty to flatter her without my troubling myself," said he, coldly and haughtily. "Besides, I shall be particularly engaged this next week."

"What! riding alone?"

"No!" he replied very sternly.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I thought it might have been."

There was a silence of some moments, but the hill was a long one, so he began again. "Where did you meet this Mrs. Hargrave?" He paused for an answer.

"I saw her at S—" said Dormer at length, mastering his anger and confusion.

"At S— you say. Did you see much of her? or could she have any reason for shunning you? I ask because she refused to visit us, though I urged her, and she knew you were with us."

"Impossible! It cannot be!" burst forth Dormer, surprised, hurt and angry. "She cannot wish to shun me. Her brow spoke confusion but not dislike. She shall, she must meet me! What did she say? how did she look? when she heard my name."

Alford bust into a loud laugh. "Well I never could have believed this possible! I really thought an earthly being was too material for you, and that nothing less aerial than a rainbow could have won you. What will Catherine say? I must gallop to tell her."

Away he went; but, gallop as he would, Dormer was still at his side. A spiked gate, too high for a leap, must be passed through. "Open Sesame!" was useless; the spell was powerless, and Alford was obliged to dismount.

Mr. Dormer dismounted also ; and when the gate was closed, took his friend's arm and proposed a walk. Alford, revelling in mischief, would have declined the invitation, but his friend's half-earnest, half-haughty look, produced a burst of laughter, during which he allowed himself to be led quietly forward. Neither spoke, for Alford enjoyed the mischievous pleasure of increasing his friend's awkwardness by his silence ; and Dormer felt as if appealing to Alford's forbearance would be beneath his dignity, yet to have his feelings and her name become the subject of jest and merriment was not to be thought of. Too proud to stoop with a good grace he at last said abruptly :

"As my friend, Alford, you will never mention this subject again to me or to another."

"Is concealment a proof of friendship?" said his friend, bending on him an enquiring look.

"Pshaw ! I have other things to talk to you about."

"Indeed ! then make haste and discuss them, and we will talk about this matter afterwards. Who knows but it may contain the elements of high treason, or murder, or felony, or some such heinous crime ; and, as my father would say, 'eternal shame would rest on the eldest son of a peer and a Privy Councillor, should he fail to sift such a matter to the bottom.' So



explain! explain! What, shy about it? Nay, never colour; you are not the first wise man who has lost his heart, and his senses too, to a pretty foot, or a well-turned ankle, or a good jointure. Which doth this gentle dame possess?"

"I tell you," said Dormer, worked up to a passion by this raillery, "it were degradation to think of her, much more to name her, in your presence. Do you think that Percy Dormer would give a second thought to the loveliest face or the finest foot and ankle in Christendom? or that his heart would stoop to court a jointure? As well might you think he would seek to rule for the gauds of pomp or the fawning of slaves. Lovely as she is, others may equal her in the material part of her beauty. Other forms may be as slight, other eyes as deep and blue, other cheeks as rich and downy. But where can you find all these lit up, and sublimed by such a mind? One while soft, timid, shy, gentle, as the dawn of early morning in all its misty loveliness, or the first sweet hopes of childhood's happy years: and then bright as our manhood's brighter dream, before the spirit's blight; glowing and brilliant as the sunset hour—that time, when hope and memory mingle so wildly sweet together. With just enough of earth to teach us to love, not wor-

ship; and yet, so much of heaven, as to repine and purify the thoughts that rest upon her."

"Hear! hear! hear! Hear! hear! hear! One while she is like a misty morning or a child's hoop or top. Which was it? let me remember! Do repeat it, there is a good fellow! or, perhaps, you will write it down for me. It is the very thing for Miss Juliana Waitman's album. A misty morning and a glowing sunset! Beautiful contrast! I declare, I thought I was listening to the maiden speech of a first classman, praising his college. You really must have written those 'Lines to a Lady' in one of the *Annals*, beginning—

'Those eyes, sweet lady, glistening through their lashes,  
Gleam like the mid-day sun when rain around us splashes.'

But who is this thing of poetry? this woman with a mind so marvellously balanced between earth and heaven? When we young men talk of a woman's mind, we mean a lovely form and a sensitive heart; but, of course, you mean something more. May I presume to enquire if Hargrave is the name this morning's mist bears in this earthly world of ours?"

"You are incorrigible! and I am a fool to heed or answer you," said his friend in a wrathful tone, who had been writhing under the banter. "On! Proclaim my folly! and hold mock at it. I will delay you no longer."

“I thank you; I am in no hurry,” said he in a careless tone. “In truth I am half tired of laughing at folly, and have thought sometimes of looking grave at wisdom; but, just now, I think I shall moralize on the blindness of lovers. This Mrs. Hargrave, in my mind, is tolerable, but nothing to make a fuss about; a very respectable-looking lady, but no more. Now, my heiress is worth looking at. I tell you what, you had better not make up your mind till you have seen her; for I will wager my favourite hunter, after having been one hour in her society, you will be for transferring this aerial description from the widow to the heiress. What say you?”

“Hang the heiress!” cried Dormer, in a towering passion.

Alford shrugged his shoulders, in pretended horror, and asked if all her admirers were to share the same fate, as in that case the county would be depopulated.

His friend was too angry to deign a reply, but, mounting his horse, rode on; and Alford, thinking he had carried his raillery too far, apologised and made his peace by promising silence towards Catherine, guidance to Mrs. Hargrave's on Monday, the day after the next, and a sly declaration at the end, that he would be sure and not introduce him to the heiress.

## CHAPTER V.

She was a phantom of delight,  
 When first she gleamed upon my sight :  
 A lovely apparition, sent  
 To be a moment's ornament.  
 Her eyes like stars of twilight fair,  
 Like twilight too her dusky hair ;  
 But all things else about her, drawn  
 From May-day and the cheerful dawn.  
 A dancing shape—an image gay—  
 To haunt—and startle—and way-lay.  
 I saw her upon nearer view,  
 A spirit, yet a woman too !  
 A countenance, in which did meet  
 Sweet records, promises as sweet.  
 A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
 To warm, to comfort, to command ;  
 And yet a spirit still—and bright  
 With something of an angel light.

WORDSWORTH.

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Parting day  
 Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues  
 With a new colour as it gasps away ;  
 The last still loveliest, till 'tis gone and all is grey.

BYRON.

THAT Miss St. Maur, instead of Mrs. Hargrave, was the real object of Dormer's panegyric, Alford did not for one moment doubt ; but how the mistake had arisen was beyond

his comprehension. His love of mischief, not always very justifiably gratified, made him cautious of asking many questions, lest in acquiring knowledge himself, he should likewise enlighten his friend, and thus spoil his own sport.

About two o'clock on Monday, that time having been fixed for the visit to Mrs. Hargrave, Mr. Dormer entered the drawing room at Marston Hall, thinking of the coming meeting, and most heartily weary of the company of his noble host, who, from a sly suggestion of Alford, had insisted on showing him some improvements in his farm. Helen had arrived a short time before, and was too much engaged in an animated conversation with Catherine to notice the opening of the door. Alford, who had insisted on her taking off her bonnet, that he might see the full effect of Dormer's salutation, was seated nearly opposite.

Dormer entered the apartment with an air in which weariness at what had been, and anticipation of what was to be, were equally mingled; and, thinking only of his visit, won his way between *chaises longues*, and ottomans, *fauteuils*, and footstools, till he stood beside Alford.

"Have you ordered the horses?" he enquired, quite unconscious of the presence of the ladies.

“Not yet; but, if Miss St. Maur will excuse my leaving her to Catherine’s entertainment so soon after her arrival, I will do so directly.”

The name of the heiress was no inducement for Dormer to look round, and he pretended to be intent on a newspaper lying on the table, till startled by a sweet and musical voice playfully releasing Alford from the trouble of amusing her, he turned quickly round and beheld before him the lovely being whose charms had rendered him so eloquent two days before.

Surprised at a sight so unexpected, and vexed at Alford’s smile, he stood for one minute looking at her with flushing cheek, and in awkward silence; the next, he was by her side, pouring forth in a less dignified and connected strain than was his wont, his pleasure at this meeting: in short, a whole torrent of hopes, fears, apologies, and congratulations. If the unexpected surprise, and the looks of Alford, had confused the gentleman, how could they do less than have the same effect on the lady. When she saw those brilliant eyes fixed full upon her, saying in the plainest manner the most flattering things; and heard him claim her acquaintance with a warmth that would admit of no denial; and thought of the scene with her cousin, and their previous meetings, her confusion became

still greater than that of Mr. Dormer ; and, for almost the first time in her life, she lost all self-possession, and listened with changing cheek and downcast eyes to all his expressions of pleasure at this meeting.

To Lady Catherine this scene was strange, and, to all appearance, any thing but pleasing ; whilst to her brother it afforded great amusement, mixed with some surprise, as even his penetration failed to make the riddle quite clear. Determined to amuse himself still more, without the slightest pity for their confusion, he began to “make confusion worse confounded.”

“Why, what is the meaning of all this, Dormer ?” looking provokingly from one to the other. On Saturday, you declare you detest heiresses, and positively refused to be introduced to this lady ; yet on Monday, you claim her acquaintance with an ardour that will admit of no doubt as to your sincerity.”

“What do you mean ?” said Mr. Dormer, turning angrily towards his friend. “You know very well, far from declining an introduction to this lady, that it was my first wish, and that you had promised to take me to her residence to-day.”

“I am sorry to contradict, but indeed I know no such thing. I am certain I heard you

declare that you would not be introduced to Miss St. Maur; that you detested her, and that she was only fit to be sold to a goldsmith by weight; and, on my urging you farther, you said, 'Hang the heiress!' and favoured me with a most sublime and lover-like description of Mrs. Hargrave; in which you compared her to the mist of the morn, and the glow of the sunset—with just enough of earth to be loved, yet sufficient of heaven to be adored. If you deny all this, then shall I 'doubt truth to be a liar!' Miss St. Maur, you shall judge between us."

The anger and confusion of Dormer, during this *exposé*, might have satisfied a more malicious trickster than his lordship. To have his feelings thus thrown open to the public gaze; to find that he had uttered disparaging things of the only woman who had at all equalled his ideas of what woman should be; to have those things brought against him in her presence; to feel himself an object of ridicule; to read in the eyes of Lady Catherine a malicious pleasure at his confusion; nay, even to fancy a something arch in the look of Miss St. Maur herself: all these were things to wound and gall a proud man: and Mr. Dormer was very proud: too angry and too proud to deign an explanation, since Helen's half smile spoke her



in his eyes a partner in the conspiracy. Unfitted by nature and education to conquer raillery with raillery—aware, from experience, that to appeal to Alford's forbearance would be worse than useless—and still retaining sufficient tact to feel the ridicule of giving way to the passion which consumed him—he turned away with a wrathful look, and with considerable difficulty controlled the expression of his rage.

On Helen the effect of Alford's words had been different. Surprise, confusion, soon yielded to a feeling of woman's wounded dignity. Her confusion passed away ; and, though she could scarcely refrain from smiling at the charges brought against Mr. Dormer, and his vexation at them, yet her penetration left her little doubt as to the true state of the case ; and, feeling for his embarrassment, as well as her own dignity, she considered it high time to put a stop to Alford's merriment.

It is astonishing, considering man's superior control over himself on grand occasions, how much quicker and better a woman's tact and feeling will enable her to extricate a whole party from embarrassment on minor ones. Men, at least such men as Mr. Dormer, who had been an idol from his birth, are too proud and too lofty to turn or be turned. They would

face danger with an unblanching cheek ; they are not weak enough to yield an opinion to a laugh ; and yet raillery is death to them : and that, not from their weakness, but from their strength. Accustomed to quell impertinence by one withering look, or the stateliness of their carriage, should some one, with almost more than mortal daring, presume to continue the attack, the proud man feels he has no weapons fit to carry on the pigmy strife. The impetuous burst of indignation that on an occasion worthy of it would appear sublime, would here be only ridiculous. It would be like an elephant waging war with a monkey ; a mailed hero of ancient time, careering with an effeminate dandy of the present ; a steam vessel of a thousand horse power, engaging in a combat with a paltry fishing yawl.

The course through life of a really proud and lofty man, one of your veritable sultans, is a perpetual steeple chace : he will bear down all before him, or perish in the attempt. Fortunately for the more common-place beings who people the earth, there are but few who from nature and situation can enact the sultan, else might crowds be trampled down in the stern chace unnoted and unmourned.

The power of woman is widely different :

more accustomed to contradiction, without the brute force that can win her will; obliged to yield to husbands, brothers, and circumstances; educated more for indolent enjoyment than active exertion; shrinking with feminine delicacy from attracting the public gaze; she wins her way gently and silently through all impediments—rules by her sweetness, and governs by her helplessness. She can meet raillery with raillery as playful; disarm passion with her smiles; and, should the chance of war be likely to turn against her, she can shelter herself beneath the woman's dignity, or the capriciousness attributed to her sex. Man is like the steam vessel, holding on its course under bare poles against wind and tide, with all the pride of power. Woman is like one of the beautiful vessels of the R. Y. C. veering, tacking; her white sails glistening in the sun; her red burgee floating in the breeze; shifting her course as wind and tide obstruct her path, yet ever steering for the same desired haven; and winning her way, if with less swiftness, with more of beauty and of grace.

Helen had even more than a woman's usual tact; had been accustomed to encounter Alford from childhood; and had little doubt one word from her would silence him. Feeling for the awkwardness of the situation in which his

fooling had placed Mr. Dormer, she was anxious to relieve him from all further annoyance as soon as possible.

Had she marked his wrathful look, as he turned away ; or could she now have guessed the passion which raged within him, she might have left him to amend his humour as he could ; but, as she had no opportunity of judging of his present mood, and felt she had been in some measure the innocent cause of his annoyance, she hastened to play pacificator.

“ Alford,” said she, “ you appealed to me as judge, and I accept the office. Now, hear your sentence. That you, being the cause of all this mischief, shall forthwith make most humble apologies to Mr. Dormer and myself for your late ill-conduct ; which apologies shall be couched in general terms, to avoid all further discussion. Moreover, you shall bind yourself to keep the peace towards all now present for the space of three months ; shall be banished my presence till dinner time ; and shall be grave and silent for the whole evening. What say you, Mr. Dormer ?” smiling sweetly, “ do you think we may venture to be so merciful to such an incorrigible offender ?”

The cloud on his brow passed at the sound of that musical voice ; even Alford was forgiven, and in a moment more he stood beside her.

““Oh most righteous sentence! a second Daniel come to judgment!”” he replied, catching for once her spirit of playfulness.

“Stop,” said Alford, “you have heard nothing. I demanded a fair trial.”

“No, you demanded a fair judge, and that you had.”

“A pun from Percy Dormer! Nay then, I yield me to my fate. But first let me explain.”

“No explanation is required;” replied Helen, colouring slightly.

“That is unjust,” said Lady Catherine pettishly; “explain, Alford, by all means: it will be vastly entertaining; besides, I do not see how you are to blame. In my view, the guilt rests with Mr. Dormer; though Helen, with her usual magnanimity, seems inclined to pardon him the putting her on a par with old fashioned plate, and only to punish you for repeating it.”

“I shrink from no explanation, Lady Catherine Alford,” said Mr. Dormer proudly. “Alford knows what I said applied to heiresses in general, not to the one bright exception; and that my remarks were wrung from me by persecution. Why he chose to name Mrs. Hargrave instead of Miss St. Maur, as the lady to whom I bowed, he alone can explain.”

Lady Catherine drew back in haughty silence,

for she too was an heiress, though on a small scale, and received the remark as personal; but in this she did Mr. Dormer injustice.

“In giving Hargrave instead of St. Maur I acted in perfect innocence, as, believing you unacquainted with Helen, I concluded Mrs. Hargrave must have been the lady to whom you bowed; that I have been equally innocent in the rest of this adventure, I am aware it would be useless to assert before two such prejudiced judges. As you will neither hear me in my defence, nor allow Catherine to plead for me, I can but throw myself on your mercy. Come Helen, remember what your pet Shakespeare says about mercy, and do not banish me from your presence.”

“What think you, Mr. Dormer? May we venture on a free pardon?”

“Why, yes! I think even I would be his surety that he could never offend you again.”

Helen blushed at the emphasis on the word *you*, and pronounced a full pardon.

“Thanks, noble judge!” said the culprit, bowing low and then adding archly, “But I think Dormer should stand a trial.”

“Is this the way our mercy is repaid? You lead your friend into a labyrinth, and then take advantage of his entanglement. We will hear no more of this matter.”

The look and tone, though half playful, were sufficient, and Alford was silent.

"What is this matter you will hear no more of?" asked Lady Marston, entering the room at the moment; "has Alford been at his pranks again?"

"It is very hard, mother! there is no mischief done but all think I have some share in it: do pray, Catherine, stand up in my defence, and relate what has passed."

"After my mercy?" said Helen.

"Oh! it was nothing at all," said Catherine bitterly; "but Miss St. Maur and the gentlemen have been playing the first part of 'Much Ado about Nothing,' and the finale will doubtless be enacted hereafter, in a spirit worthy the author."

Lady Marston and Mr. Dormer looked surprised, Alford annoyed, and Helen blushed for the lady and herself.

"You do not state the thing correctly, Catherine," said her brother gaily, to relieve all parties.

"It was 'All's Well that Ends Well,' and I found the play very entertaining," he added archly.

"It may have been sport to you and death to others," said Catherine, as she left the room.

"I am ready now, my dear," said Lady Marston to Helen.

"Where are you going?" inquired her son.

"To my school; and Helen, dear child, goes to assist me."

"Now this is very unfair, taking Helen away when I have scarcely spoken to her; I have half a mind to join the party."

"Agreed, if Helen will be surety for your not disturbing the gravity of the children."

"That will I not, dear madam. Your son is so incorrigible, and presumes so much on our childish friendship and certain pretty speeches he made me the other day, that I see I must assume more dignity, and be Miss St. Maur, instead of Helen."

"Not so," he replied, taking her hand as he spoke, to lead her to the donkey chaise; "let us always be Helen and Alford, and I really will be a good boy: but stop," pausing abruptly, "Dormer will insist on my conducting him to Mrs. Hargrave. Have you any message for your aunt?"

"Yes! that she will be kind enough to detain you till the conclusion of my visit."

"And Dormer also?" looking archly from one to the other.

"That must be at her pleasure. I have nothing to do with Mr. Dormer's movements."

"There Dormer! you may come or go as you



please; Miss St. Maur cares no more for you than for Cathy's poodle!"

Mr. Dormer looked displeased, and Helen adjusted her shawl to conceal blush, or smile; which is not known.

"Pity me, Helen," said her ladyship, "for having such a mad son. I wonder how you ever did him the honour of admitting him to your friendship, Mr. Dormer?"

"I have ever lived in hopes he would amend."

"That hope is vain, I am convinced," cried Helen, drawing back and colouring highly at something he had whispered in her ear. "Take my arm, dear lady Marston; and, with your leave, we will forbid all further attendance."

But the gentlemen pleaded hard; their pleadings prevailed, and they were allowed to hand the ladies to the carriage, Alford playing donkey boy, and in obedience to a whispered command from Helen, making no more allusions to the past.

Wild and wreckless as Lord Alford was, there were many redeeming points in the character. The lower classes ever found in him a warm, and, strange to say, a judicious friend: his temper was rarely ruffled, and it was beautiful to see his attention to his mother. Aware that even the gentle motion of a donkey was almost too much for her delicate frame to endure, his

whole attention was engaged in taking care that no stone or piece of rough ground should occasion a ruder action: arrived at the school he was equally careful in helping her out, and in placing her in a comfortable arm-chair. The mother's glistening eye spoke her estimation of his attentions, and the son thought if both parents had been like this one, what a different character he might have been.

On ordinary occasions a village school-room would not have been a place calculated to afford much pleasure to either of the gentlemen, yet now, though the visit was by no means short, neither had wished it shorter. The calm gentle manner of Lady Marston, with her sweet look of patient suffering, contrasted, yet harmonized even in its contrast, with the glowing beauty and witching smiles of Helen; who won the most timid to boldness, and the most silent to speech. The clearness and simplicity of her questions, the patience with which she explained to the stupid, the pleasure with which she listened to the intelligent, and the warm praise she bestowed on the deserving, threw a spell over the labours of the school-room, of which, we fear, such scenes are sometimes destitute; and visitors and visited felt regret when the fear of fatiguing Lady Marston warned them to return.

“You must come and assist me in my school sometimes, dear Helen, for I am seldom able to do much; and Catherine, I am sorry to say, complains the children are so dirty and ugly and stupid, that she cannot bear to attend them.”

“Catherine’s talents are so great, and she has so many accomplishments, and so much refinement, that one cannot be surprised she should find the village children dirty and stupid; but she is very liberal with her contributions, and we must not expect too much,” replied Helen.

Her ladyship felt her kindness, and pressed her hand in return; but sighed deeply, for even the fondness of a mother could not blind her to the defects of her child.

“Yes, Helen!” said Alford gaily, “you and I will attend to the school, for you have quite given me a taste for it; and even Dormer, though a refiner, has decided that the future Mrs. D. may superintend the learning of A B C, provided she resembles you, and never makes an intended visit to the school an excuse for thick leather shoes, cotton stockings, and wearing a two-year old gown.”

Dormer bit his lip, for, had his friend possessed the ring of the fairy tale, he could have scarcely defined his feelings more clearly.

"Agreed," said Helen, laughing, and answering only to the first part of the speech, though a sly glance had made her aware of the annoyance its termination had occasioned. "You shall teach the boys, and I the girls."

"No, indeed! we teach together."

"And, 'make confusion worse confounded,' as you did not long since. But the school seems already so well managed that I doubt if our assistance will be required."

"Oh! that is due to Annie Grey."

"To Annie Grey! And who is Annie Grey? for her name alone is a romance."

"So it is," said Alford, answering for his mother, "and Miss Jones would give her ears, and her mother's tongue to boot, for the change: and now I will tell you who Annie Grey is, for she deserves a description. She is the gentlest, the sweetest, the best: a lily of the valley! a violet! a primrose! the extract of a tear! the essence of a sigh! the spirit of an adieu! a dew-drop on a rose!"

"Beautiful! I shall send for an album with an embossed border of lilies, violets, and primroses, and you shall write this in the first page. But I must apply to your mother for more reasonable information, since you only tell me what she is, and not who she is."

"She is the orphan grandchild of the Nor-

tons, has resided with them about two years, and may almost warrant Alford's description. I want to interest you for her, as she needs a friend, and I know your warm heart. Mr. Norton our vicar is now so old as to be scarcely able to perform the public duties of his profession, yet is too poor to keep a curate; and Mrs. Norton, from paralysis, is almost helpless. Poor Annie's parents died about three years since at her father's curacy in the north, leaving their child about eight hundred pounds, all their little saving. Though delicate, she never complains, but is all that the most precious child could be to the Nortons, and as far as is in her power, supplies her grandfather's place in the parish. Poverty and old age prevent his mixing in society, and Annie is so shy she can scarcely be persuaded to go any where. I fancy her lonely life wears on her spirits, and I want you to win her from herself. I know she is afraid of Catherine, but I have taught her to love you."

"Poor thing! to be an orphan, and so young! We must be sisters," said Helen, and the tears stood in her eyes as she thought of her own loss. "When shall I call on her?"

"Suppose you go to-day. Catherine will go with you, I have no doubt, as I heard her say she meant to call."

Lady Catherine agreed to the plan, and escorted by the gentlemen the young ladies set off for Marston Vicarage, with which and its inhabitants Helen was delighted.

Mr. Norton, whom she had known before, was one alive to all the dignity of his profession, cheerfully pious, charitable in pecuniary matters to the utmost of his means, still more charitable in matters of the mind; one of those beautifully simple and single-hearted beings, who win the love and respect of even the most worldly. Annie had much of her grandfather's character. Half child, half woman; with her soft blue eyes; her light curls falling over her fair brow; and her full cheek, that changed its colour with a feeling or a thought; and her small but delicate and fragile figure, she seemed almost to realise our fancies of a being from a higher world. Though shy, she was not awkward, and ere the visit was ended, she had consented to spend some days at Hurlestone, and felt in Helen she had found a new object to love. As they passed through the little garden, gay with innumerable flowers, Lady Catherine remarked an old moss rose tree with only one bud. "Why do you allow that shabby old tree to encumber the ground?" asked she. "Dig it up, and the gardener shall bring you a better one, for your garden is really very neat."

"Thank you, Lady Catherine," said Miss Grey, colouring deeply, and bending over the rose tree; "but I prize that more than any flower at Marston Hall: it was planted by my mother."

"Why it has but one poor blighted flower, child!" remarked her ladyship contemptuously.

"And even that may be gone soon," said Annie sorrowfully, whilst a tear fell on the rose over which she was bending.

"Most likely," said Catherine carelessly.

Miss Grey started, and the colour left her cheeks; the words seemed a confirmation of her half prophecy. Helen saw in an instant what was passing in her mind. "You are wrong, Catherine," she said, "with a little fresh mould, I have little doubt the bush will soon flourish again. You must let me prescribe for it, my dear Miss Grey," and she took her hand kindly. "I have a passion for moss-roses! And now good bye, for we must not detain you any longer."

"I wonder what the people see in Annie Grey, as they all choose to call her, to like so much?" said Lady Catherine, as they returned home. A mere stupid, simple, country girl,

'With hair that is lint-white,  
And skin that is milk-white!'

Give her red eyes, and she might equal in

beauty a French rabbit. The mind seems of the same colour as the hair, cold, and insipid, and only fit to superintend a dairy, a poultry-yard, and a nursery."

"She is young and shy," replied Helen warmly, "and has lived retired; but she is one of the sweetest, most winning beings I ever beheld."

"And you think her beautiful?"

"More than beautiful! I think her almost angelic."

"Stylish?"

"If she has not the style of a woman of fashion, she has at least none of her impertinence," said her brother quickly.

"Oh! is it so? 'I cry your pardon!'" and bowing ironically, she entered the house before he could reply.

"Poor Annie Grey!" remarked his lordship; "I shall not give up your defence from dread of Cathy's taunts. She is much to be pitied."

"To be envied rather," said Dormer warmly, "for she has won Miss St. Maur's love and regard."

Helen was standing alone at an open window, admiring a beautiful sunset, when Mr. Dormer entered from the dining-room. So noiseless was his step, that she knew not he had intruded on her solitude, nor did he wish her to know it.



Silent and still he stood beside her, watching her lovely face, and scarcely breathing lest it should disturb her. At that moment, he felt, or thought he felt, that the lowliest lot, if shared with her, would be happiness: the proudest, if unshared with her, but misery!

She sighed, and tears stood in her dark blue eyes. Why that sigh? and why those tears? He looked at her as he would read their cause. A slight noise startled her, she turned hastily round and met his gaze. There was a something so penetrating, so lustrous, and withal so flattering, that blushing she turned again abruptly to the window; he stood beside her, and his rich deep voice fell on her ear.

“There is a spell about the evening hour—an enchantment in its glory or in its quietude, which no other time can boast; it is to me the happiest or the saddest hour in all the day. The cold mist of morning speaks of what will soon be the present, and prompts to exertion. The hero holds his sword with a firmer grasp, and, exulting in the power of his strength, sees in fancy the field of battle won, and hears the shouts of victory: the statesman, glorying in his mighty mind, bursts through the toils of his opposers, and rules all meaner things, his country’s pride! The mid-day heat has something of the languor of satiety; the unsatisfaction of long possession;

the querulousness of the present. The gloom of night disperses the dreams of day, and whispers of the grave; or affords time and clearness to calculate coldly the chances and worth of success. It points to the bloody field, the widowed wife, the orphaned child, and dulls the blaze of glory, or it tells of deceitful friends, of early friendships broken, of mean and base supporters, of selfish and intriguing opponents; and twines the statesman's wreath with thorns. But evening has none of these things; or all, and a thousand more besides. The mind may trace in all its gorgeous splendour the history of its own glory, setting in brilliant majesty the object of sympathy and of admiration to all kindred souls; a giant reposing for a time, to rise again in greater strength, and power, and splendour. Yes, for once, perhaps for twice, the mind may have these thoughts, and then it can never dream such things again; at other times, it only seems to mock at all these things. Long dark shadows fall over the brightest hues; all looks weary—a chill creeps over the spirit, and the wreath of glory withers beneath its touch. Then for its moment of delight, if such it can be called, what is it? The intensity of feeling, the agonised delight, the passionate tenderness with which we bend above the dead, vowing our hearts to theirs."

He paused. Helen, won by his passionate tones, had drank in every word, had watched every feature expand, the whole face take a new character, and even when he had ceased, she withdrew not her eyes, but stood expecting him to continue. There was a strong expression of surprise on her countenance, which his dread of being ridiculous made him interpret wrongfully. The character of his countenance changed instantly, and a slight smile of self derision curled his lip.

“I beg your pardon, Miss St. Maur, for wearying you with this rhapsody. I saw a tear, and I heard a sigh ; but it seems I read such matters ill. I forgot, for a moment, that the sexes are not more different in their beauties than in their thoughts.”

There was a hauteur in his tone that piqued Helen, though she scarcely knew why.

“May not the difference of education have almost as much to do with the difference of feeling as sex itself?” she asked ; “and is it not, in some instances, rather a difference in degree than in substance? I could admire and understand your description, though I did not quite agree with you.”

“I had no right to expect you should : sighs and tears have as many objects as there are objects to gratify them. The child cries for its

play-things ; the maiden weeps—but no !” he added, checking himself, her sweet smile rebuking his churlishness,—“the maiden should weep for nothing, for all things should be given her ; her sighs and tears should only be for others.”

“Are maidens so very selfish, then, that you think to lighten their sorrow by bidding them weep for others rather than themselves ? And talk not of giving us every thing ; I never yet heard a gentleman say that ladies should have all they desire ? but what that man was the veriest tyrant in existence.”

“Can you dread a tyrant ?”

“Not much ;” and she turned away from his gaze as she spoke. “Alford has the impertinence to say I could out-Herod Herod. But you evade my question. Do you deem us so very selfish ?”

“I spoke of our wishes, not of your merits. We would save you from all other griefs, that your tears might flow only for us. We alone would awaken anxiety ; thus the selfishness rests not with you but with us.”

“And you would take care the well of our affections should not stagnate. There is more of gallantry than sincerity in your answer, I suspect. And now one question more. We are to have all for which we wish ; what if we wish for power ?”

“That cannot be : none wish for what they have. You would but weary with excess.”

His complimentary tone displeased her ; it neither suited the loftiness of her own character, or what she had imagined of his, and she proceeded more gravely.

“Will you define our power?”

“I feel it!”

“I ask in earnestness, and am answered in levity ; but you judged rightly in thinking the truth would be distasteful. I will define our boasted power. It is to win flattery and attention by a bright eye, a glowing cheek, a graceful form—to lose both when these things fade. If we resent compliments, held churlish ; if we accept them, frivolous and vain. Followed, courted, flattered, while young, rich, and beautiful ; despised and unnoticed when old, poor, and plain ; and rarely in our brightest hours deemed worthy of participating in the high things and noble dreams of men. Such is, in most instances, our power ; ever frail, fleeting, evanescent, and based on unworthy sentiments !”

He was surprised : there was an indignant force in her language, and a depth in her tone, which showed she had read his thoughts. True, he had talked of her mind, but then, as Alford said, what do men generally mean by talking

of the mind of a beautiful woman? If she have animation and feeling, so as to amuse by the one and flatter by the other, then she has mind, and quite as much as most people desire. Weak men dread a superior; wise men like a play-thing: not quite a fool perhaps, but certainly not very wise. We speak of the majority, and appeal to experience to acquit us of falsehood. What startled him most was the quickness with which she had penetrated his estimate of women; and he doubted if he understood the lovely being before him. When next he spoke it was with more of respect and less of gallantry.

“Such a definition is unjust to all. If beauty win us, it is because we judge of the jewels contained within the casket, by the exquisite workmanship lavished on the exterior. It is the diamond of the mind to which we pay our homage, through the fretted beauty of its case.”

“Oh! the marvellously new discoveries that are made every hour!” and she raised her hands in astonishment.

“There is no deceiving that woman,” thought Dormer: “now for a last effort.”

“May we never see and own an error? When the real pole-star rises on our view, may we not worship it, take it for our guide, though, during the days of our delusion, we bowed before some meaner thing?”

Helen's laughing eyes were turned full upon him, and so filled were they with their own archness, that, for once, they stood the deep gaze of his unblenchingly. There needed no words, and she spoke none; but, as she again turned from him, a shade passed over her features. It was regret that he should have stooped to deceitful compliments, but he read it as displeasure; and he was angry with himself at being, for the first time in his life, ashamed to avow his low estimate of female understanding, and angry with her for discovering his feelings.

"Miss St. Maur, I have offended you," he said with a mixture of pride and impetuosity. "Remember! it is no easy thing to throw off the prejudices of years; it is no slight triumph to overthrow them."

"It is a task you have not accomplished, Mr. Dormer; it is a triumph I neither expect or desire. We will change the conversation, if you please. I am in no mood to run a tilt for the wisdom of the sex; the evening is too peaceful for such warlike deeds."

"I will respect your wishes, though I cannot own myself defeated."

"I never expected that," she said archly, and then added, to change the subject:—"Let us talk of the beautiful skies of Italy. Tell me,

are they really so much more beautiful than ours? I fancy I should think they wanted variety."

He thought of wandering over Italy with Helen by his side, and forgot all his displeasure at her rebukes.

"You must pardon my disobedience, and allow me to describe an evening in England, more beautiful, in my eyes, than any I ever beheld even in *la belle Italie*. It was the first time I saw you."

"Oh! I pray you to forget that meeting!" half-blushing half-laughing; "or I shall be obliged to apologize for Bran and myself too."

"It was not very flattering certainly," returning her laugh with perfect good-humour, "to be taken either for a hedgehog or a starveling cat; but I suspect I ought to apologize for having frightened you, and I sought you for that purpose, though in vain. But it is not of that evening I mean to speak. I had seen you twice before. Do you remember an evening at —, when the rain forced you to take shelter in a cottage? It was then I first beheld you; bending over the sick-bed of the old grandmother, and soothing her querulous complaints; stilling the shrill cries of the sickly baby; or assisting the elder child to make up the fire, and breathing hope into the heart of the faint-



ing mother. That scene can never be forgotten."

"I remember the evening perfectly; but had no idea our acquaintance had commenced so early. Where had you found the magic belt to make you invisible, for I never suspected I had a spectator; and where was your gallantry that you did not offer to assist. What with the outrageous merriment of the children at my inefficient blowing, and the wetness of the wood, I thought the fire would never have kindled."

"I was in an out-house adjoining, in which the shower had induced me to seek shelter, and through a chink in the wall, watched your charitable exertions, so selfishly lost in admiration that I could not make up my mind to break the spell by offering assistance. Before the rain had ceased your carriage drove up. I hastened from my retreat to learn your name, but in my hurry fell over a faggot, and when I reached the door the carriage was out of sight. I made inquiries that night, but could learn nothing; and the next morning urgent business obliged me to proceed to London. Once again I saw you, and it seemed as if some act of kindness was ever to mark our interviews. As my friend Tyrrel was driving me through a small town in Dorsetshire, a child, in crossing the road, fell

just before the horses. Tyrrel was attending to something else, and the child might have perished, had not you sprung forward and snatched the little thing almost from under the horse's feet. I just caught your look of delight as you gave the child to its mother; met your glance of reproach at our apparently unfeeling conduct; and then the horses becoming unmanageable, set off at full speed, and I saw you no more. The next day I could hear nothing concerning you. At length I gave up all hopes of meeting you again; yet still you lived in my thoughts. Judge then of my pleasure at seeing you in the church-yard. Pardon me when I own I had been watching you some time, with what feelings I cannot—dare not say. How you escaped my search I know not, for it was night ere I gave up the hope of finding you. I had been so unsuccessful in my former inquiries, I decided on making none now, but to haunt the spot. The next day it was my happiness to be of service to you. Perhaps my looks and words told my pleasure too strongly, for you seemed anxious to dismiss me, and I thought your manner cold; but all conduct must have seemed so, compared to my own feelings. The questions of a meddlesome woman prevented my inquiries, and my insisting to ride alone, that I might again seek you, delayed my intro-

duction till to-day. Shall I make an apology for my inadvertent words to Alford, or have you forgiven them?"

"What if I never thought of them at all?" she said playfully, to hide the confusion this explanation had occasioned. "But some apology you do owe me. I asked you to tell me of Italian skies, and you have only told me of myself. Now look at those beautiful clouds just tinged with the glow of sunset, and wonder how we could think of aught beside. Are they not soft and lovely as the memories of those we have loved and lost. And then look at that gorgeous pile of clouds towards which they are moving, as though to teach us, sorrow for the loss of those we loved should be swallowed up in the bright hope of a re-union. Look, look at those changing clouds, each change more lovely than the last; now purple, and now crimson, mocking at the works of mortal hands; then turn to the calm serenity of the east, from whence all clouds have passed away, as though preparing for a purer and brighter dawn. As all those vapours crowding to the west increase the glory of the sunset hour, so do trials sustained, and temptations overcome, add lustre to the departure of the pious; even the shadows deepening round should please, not chill. Do they not speak of peace and calm? You must

love such an evening as this, Mr. Dormer? I am sure you do."

To have failed loving any thing for which she had thus pleaded, would have been impossible; and his looks, and a few low words, told her so. He had gazed on her glowing cheek, and listened to her soft voice, rendered more touching by feeling, till everything but the beautiful enthusiast was forgotten; and he began to think that woman might sympathise even with his high hopes. But whether she could or not, his desire to win Helen was still the same. They were silent for some time, she watching the clouds, and he her; when the entrance of the rest of the party disturbed their *tête-à-tête*.

"Catherine," said Lord Marston to his daughter, as she sat at the tea-table feeding her poodle with creamed and sugared toast, "I should think it might be possible to prevent your dog from entering the library; at least, I should imagine you might succeed if you tried it."

"I really never trouble about it," replied her Ladyship, carelessly.

"Then I wish you would trouble about it," said her father sharply, annoyed into a more decided style of speech.

"If you would keep the doors shut Jourment could not enter; and yet that would be

rather hard upon him if he have a taste for study; but I hope he is not going to turn politician, they are so prosy or so fiery."

"Catherine, you are intolerable," remarked the Earl, angrily. "I tell you Tourment has done me more mischief than the value of the whole race of dogs and puppies could repair."

"Indeed!" said she, looking most provokingly stupid. "Do you hear that?" turning to her brother and his friend. "*Pauvre* Tourment! what has he done? Devoured Magna Charta? or digested Machiavel?"

"Worse, Lady Catherine Alford. He has upset the ink over every thing, and thrown down the busts of the immortal Pitt and Fox and Windham and Sheridan," said he, pompously.

"Horrid little wretch! inked your paws, I dare say! Let me see;" and she examined each minutely. "Only see, papa, what a clever little animal; he has not a spot of ink about him."

"Catherine," said his Lordship, still more angrily, provoked by her *nonchalance* at the overthrow of the statesmen, "if you will not keep your dog out of the library he shall quit Marston Hall; nothing is safe from him."

"I was thinking of taking lodgings for him at Brighton, for he is nervous, poor fellow! and

requires sea-bathing; but when did Tourment do all this mischief? and are you quite sure he is the culprit?"

"None but yourself could doubt it. I heard a rush as of something escaping from the window, and entered the room just in time to see my valuable busts fall to the ground."

"Then is Tourment innocent, for he was in my dressing-room the whole of the day."

"Impossible! how else could it have happened?"

"Perhaps Mr. Dormer did it," said she, looking simple.

The stupid simplicity of her look and tone, joined to the idea of the stately Mr. Dormer having a hand in mischief, was irresistible, and Helen turned away to conceal her merriment; as she did so, she caught a look from Alford which revealed to her the real criminal. The accused made no reply, and did not deign to look conscious of having been alluded to, whilst Lord Marston appeared horrified at such a charge having been brought against his distinguished guest, a member of Parliament, and the heir of an ancient earldom.

"I cannot imagine, Catherine—indeed it is impossible to understand—what can have induced you to think such a thing possible;" for that she did not think it possible never entered

his mind. "Really, Lady Catherine, you should be more cautious in what you say; I am sure it is impossible—nay, I am convinced it is quite out of the question—that Mr. Dormer could have known any thing about it;" and then turning to his guest, he favoured him with a long and tedious apology for the suspicions of his daughter, mingled with conjectures as to the real culprit, and ended by appealing to Alford, and half insinuating a doubt as to his innocence.

"It is most extraordinary," said his son, with difficulty restraining his laughter. "When I left the library, just before you entered, Pitt and Fox were looking very amicably at each other from their respective pedestals. Do you think it can portend any unexpected political movement?"

"I am half inclined to fear,—that is, I have some idea, some doubts on the subject. There seems to have been some slight indications of a feeling approaching to a wish for a little change in some of the German States; and I have heard it whispered that Lord A. has been smiled on a little,—a very little less graciously in certain quarters. Common minds see nothing in these things, and call them trifles, and little effervescences, but the sage and observing see these things differently;" and his Lordship endeavoured to look Wisdom personified.

“Oh! you allude to Schmilscothe and Glutphcher, persuading the German students to pour out the blood of the obnoxious Professors as libations to the Goddess of Liberty, with magical incantations; and then unite with the Carbonari, the Constitutionalists, the Liberals, and the Radicals, in abolishing all titles of nobility and rights of property, and establishing one universal republic.”

“Is this possible? Where did you see this?” inquired his Lordship in anxious and dreadful alarm. It is quite new to me.” It could not be otherwise.

“I do not recollect who told me,” said his son gravely and calmly.

“Can it be true? Do they venture to declare their infamous intentions so openly? I should think,—that is, I should imagine,—but I have not thought much on the subject,—that something should be done instantly. Perhaps have the Radicals watched. I will write to Lord D. on the subject. The times are fearful to all thinking men; for the respect for ancient institutions is giving place to admiration for traitors and demagogues; and I hear that Old Sarum has been attacked, and the frowns of his most gracious Majesty been lightly spoken of. Who did you say headed the gang?”

Again Alford pronounced the unpronounceable names in a manner that, whilst it con-



vinced his Lordship the pronounciation was correct, left him no hope of imitating it.

“Do, pray, recollect where you heard it; or perhaps you read it. Was it in the Times?”

“No; I am sure it was not in the Times, nor the Courier, nor the Morning Post, nor the Globe. Perhaps I heard it. I never do recollect about these things, you know.”

“It really is very provoking, Alford; you never recollect any thing of importance.”

“No,” replied his son, yawning; “the people tell such lies about politics I make a point of never attending to any thing of the sort.”

“Have you seen or heard any thing of this fearful report, Mr. Dormer; you understand the importance of these matters;” looking reproachfully at Alford.

Dormer, was obliged to confess his utter ignorance, and the Earl to wait till the next day’s papers for further information.

Helen alone pitied his distress, and to relieve him proposed chess, knowing it to be a game in which he thought he excelled. Mr. Dormer considered she showed great want of taste in not preferring his conversation, and accustomed to adulation felt a little piqued; had he known how much she would have preferred a *tête-à-tête* with him, he would have more properly appre-

ciated her self-denial, and better understood her character. Whether chess was really invented at the siege of Troy, as some pretend, must be left to the decision of antiquaries ; at any rate, the present game seemed likely to last nearly as long as that celebrated tale. What with his lordship's veneration for the king ; his making his subjects crowd in all due loyalty around him ; and all being as doubtful and slow in their movements as the Earl himself, the game advanced but slowly ; so slowly, indeed, that Helen's thoughts wandered to other things, and her antagonist thought himself sure of victory. Alford had left the room unperceived—Catherine reclined on a sofa—Lady Marston had retired as usual—and Mr. Dormer had taken a seat at a little distance, and read, or pretended to read.

“Check to your king,” said his lordship, moving a bishop after twenty minutes' deliberation, in a tone in which triumph at his success, and awe at such treason to his majesty, were strongly blended. Helen started, and found her inattention had given her adversary a chance of winning more easily than she had intended.

“If you please, my lord,” said a servant, “Richard Tims is come to speak to your lordship about Robert Neale and some poachers.”

“His lordship hesitated ; but the desire of

catching Robert Neale and some poachers conquered ; and, ordering the servant to show Richard Tims into the study, he left the room, after a wearisome apology to Helen, in which all the duties of a magistrate were enumerated.

“Ten to one on Magistrate against Gambler !” cried Alford, stepping from behind a screen. “Now, Helen, what do you not owe me for saving you from this interminable game ? or, rather, from being conquered ?” glancing over the board.

“Why ? is Richard Tims a connection of your German friends ?”

“No ! not quite so bad as that !” laughing at her arch look. “I only hinted to Tims that his tale should be told immediately, and every particular clearly detailed ; and Tims, I know, will profit by the hint. But how came you to discover me ? I verily believe Satan himself could not deceive you.”

“Do you mean to place yourself on a par with that renowned and respectable gentleman ?”

“By no means lady fair ; but I had piqued myself on playing the part so admirably, that—”

“Was the deceiving and alarming your father by a falsehood a thing on which to pique yourself.”

“Not quite a falsehood ! I kept clear of that.”

“It was implied if not asserted, and that is a very nice distinction.”

“Well, but how else could I get out of the scrape about Pitt and Fox? the former of whom I hate whilst pursuing, and the latter pursue without hating.”

“See the usual consequences of one error; a second is committed to hide the first. You have now two scrapes to get out of instead of one. What will you say when the papers omit all mention of your German plot?”

“Will you not assist me? Do help me this once, and I will be good for the future. Pray do?” and he assumed such a doleful look, that Helen could not forbear laughing, though she shook her head reproachfully.

“How can you guide and advise me, when you cannot guide yourself?”

“Well, Helen, do not look so reproachfully! It is very wrong, and I really will try to mend. If you were always with me I am sure I should be better.”

“I fear not; but we will see what can be done, provided you hint no more falsehoods.”

“Thanks without number, lady mine; and now, as a proof of your forgiveness, sing to me. You will be free for an hour at least.” And he led her to the piano.

“I wish you two would make up your lover’s

quarrels a little more quietly," said Lady Catherine, yawning. "You have disturbed a most delicious slumber, and roused Mr. Dormer from his studies. Pray what are the fashions for the next month? as I see you have been studying Townshend.

"Percy Dormer studying the fashions! Impossible!" said Alford; "and yet it is," glancing over his shoulder. "What punishment does he not deserve for studying the semblances, when such lovely personifications are before him."

"I must thank you, Helen, for winning me a compliment from my brother."

"Alford assures me he never compliments," said Helen archly.

"I cannot compliment you."

"Admirable! Take care you do not teach me impertinence."

"I should be proud to be your instructor in any thing."

"A second edition of the 'Lover turned Tutor,'" said Catherine, glancing at Dormer; but who concealed his face from her observation.

"No!" replied Alford laughing, "the hind that would be mated with a lion, must die for love. Helen knows I do not aspire so high.

Viscountess Alford must be,

‘A being not too bright, or good,  
For human nature’s daily food ;’

or she might have cause to blush for her lord, and some others,” looking at his sister. “But hush, ‘My Delia sings! and sings of love!’ Leave the fashions, Dormer, and come and turn over the leaves, that I may resign myself to the delirium of sweet sounds.” Mr. Dormer advanced slowly, not as if in obedience to the command, but as though it was his will and pleasure so to do.

“Do not trouble yourself,” said Helen; “I can turn the leaves for myself, and Alford does not deserve to be obeyed.”

The smile, the tone, dispelled his discontent, and kept him chained to her side; now listening to her rich sweet voice as she sung song after song to please her capricious commander; and now taking his part in their animated conversation.

“What think you of that!” whispered Alford, throwing himself on the sofa by his sister, and turning her attention to Percy and Helen, who were deeply engaged in conversation.

Looking at them through her glass for a moment, she replied loud enough to be heard

in all parts of the room, "I think, as you said just now, 'The hind that would be mated with a lion, should die for love.' Do not you think so, Helen?"

"I have not thought about it, since Alford did me the honour to account me a lion," she replied calmly.

"We bow with deference to your experience on the subject," said Dormer with bitterness, alluding to some old reported love tale.

The random shaft struck home ; her weapons had recoiled upon herself ; and, despite her usual self-command, she coloured.

It was long ere Lord Marston returned ; and during her absence Alford or Tourment had displaced the chessmen ; but, as Helen owned herself nearly conquered, he was not very particular in his inquiries.

## CHAPTER VI.

The storm may hush, and the lightning stay,  
And the sea become serene,  
But the early morn's returning ray  
Shews where that storm has been ;  
And there lies a wreck on the breakers cast,  
Marking the spot where the storm has past.

And the storm of the mind is full as strong,  
It leaves as deep a print ;  
It marks the face as it moves along,  
And stamps it in passion's mint ;  
As the dash of the billows' sparkling play  
Shews where the rough rock lies ;  
So the lines of the human face betray  
Each pang which the spirit tries.  
The harder the contest, the firmer the oak :  
The wider the waste, the deeper the stroke.

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*L'orgueil est un mendicant qui crie aussi haut que le besoin,  
qui est infiniment plus insatiable.*

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“ WILL you ride over to Hurlestone with me this morning, Catherine?” said Helen.

“ What, home-sick already? Come here on Monday, and want to ride over on Thursday. What can you want? Do not the gentlemen make your visit here agreeable. I am sure I thought Mr. Dormer and Alford had done



their best but perhaps you are tired of them, as the former, at least, has never allowed you one moment to yourself since your arrival. Gentlemen," said she, as they entered the room, "Miss St. Maur is weary of you, and has announced her desire of seeking one quiet hour in her native woods, as you never leave her alone one moment. Ah, you may well look surprised! but there is no accounting for the fancies of an heiress."

"If you would depend on your recollection rather than on your imagination when speaking of me, Catherine, I should be obliged to you. Your brother and Mr. Dormer will do me the justice to believe I never thought or said any thing of the sort. I wish to see my aunt and my steward on business; but would by no means force you to accompany me. Alford, will you order my horse and groom?"

"It is of no use to be angry with me, Helen; you know I always take my own course."

"I wish you would take a wiser and a better one," said her mother with a sigh, adding "if not particularly inconvenient, you should accompany Helen, and make my apologies to Mrs. Hargrave."

"Make me your deputy, dear mother," said Alford.

"No! that cannot be! you know you are en-

gaged to go with Lord Marston on some county business."

"Oh! now I understand your conduct, Helen."

"Your understanding on most occasions is unimpeachable, Catherine; but, if you chose to accompany me, you will find my appointment for to-day was made last week."

"Well, don't look so grave, and I will do the polite to Mrs. Hargrave; but you must not expect apologies, I never make them."

"I have learned not to expect some things; and to take others as they are," said Helen good naturedly, though hurt at what had passed.

"Will you not invite us to Hurlestone?" enquired Alford; "the county business is deferred till to morrow."

"Pardon me," said she gravely; "I have already laid too heavy a tax on your politeness; the last two days must have wearied you of being my escort," and she left the room as she spoke.

"Thanks to you, Catherine: you never were fond of Helen, and care little how you displease her."

"It is your turn to scold now, Mr. Dormer; and then I shall have received blame from every one," said Lady Catherine, turning towards him, with apparent indifference. "Out with

it! Let the thunder but equal the lightning, and I shall be stunned."

"The lightning has no power on the blind, or the thunder on the deaf," replied he angrily.

"That is," said Alford, "none so deaf as those that wont hear."

"Very sublime! and thank you for explaining it, lest I should not have understood," curtsying as she spoke. "I suppose, in return, I must issue my commands for your attendance: enough for Helen that it is my will."

"I have desired the gentlemen to go with us," said Catherine, as they mounted; "and it is of no use disputing the point. I was too much afraid of a lecture on the proprieties to venture on a *tête-à-tête*; besides, Mr. Dormer was in such a sublime mood I thought it a pity it should be wasted."

"If I do not dispute the point, Catherine, it is scarcely out of courtesy to you."

"I am fully aware of that;" putting her horse into a canter as she spoke.

On this day, as well as on the two preceding, Lady Catherine appeared out of humour, and either to hide it from her guests, or from some other cause, she remained by Alford's side. At first, Helen had tried to induce her to join in the conversation, but the difficulty of the attempt, joined to the charms of Dormer's eloquence, caused the cessation of her efforts.

As they passed through the village, it was delightful to see the pleasure with which all recognized our heroine. Even Dormer's accents fell unheeded on her ear, as she spoke kindly to the present or enquired after the absent; and, what was still more marvellous, he did not quarrel with her inattention.

"What a delight it must be to you, Helen," remarked Catherine, "that the eccentricity or madness of your rector Mr. Woodley, has induced him to confine his clerical duties to the mere Sunday service; since you can manage the parish now in your own way."

"Do not talk lightly of such a serious thing. It is great distress to me, and I have several times offered, though in vain, to provide a curate: my humble endeavours ill supply the want of an earnest minister."

Catherine had, for once, the good sense to be silent.

"Oh! how is Bran?" said Alford. "I ask a thousand pardons for having forgotten him."

"So I should think; but here he comes to answer for himself;" and in a few moments he was bounding round her in every direction. "Down, dog!" cried Mr. Dormer angrily, provoked at his having interrupted an interesting conversation, and making a cut at him with his whip.

The dog felt the whip, looked fiercely at him, and then up in Helen's face; she understood the appeal, for Dormer's frown and action were not lost upon her.

"Be quiet, my own pet!" and the dog was quiet in a moment. "I am sorry Bran was troublesome to you, Mr. Dormer; but he is accustomed to be ruled by kindness, not by blows."

He bit his lips at the rebuke, and dared not trust himself to speak.

"Helen is a riddle not easily read," remarked Catherine to her brother. "She would sacrifice herself to her lover; and then sacrifice him to her dog."

"What sacrifice would there be in wedding Dormer?"

"The sacrifice of the dove to the hawk; of the lamb to the lion."

"You are prejudiced; Dormer is even more noble than hawk or lion, and Helen has sense and prudence joined to her sweet temper. Remember too, my sage sister, hawks may be lured, and lions tamed."

"Certainly!

'A merlin small she held upon her hand,  
With hood and jesses galantlie bedight;  
But little did he need, or hood or band,  
Could he but gaze on her, full safe were he from flight.' "

"Very pretty in poetry, but rather melan-

choly in practice, and Helen has a heart that can break : *mais nous verrons.*”

As they dismounted Helen scarcely availed herself of Mr. Dormer's rather sullenly offered assistance, and to avoid any conversation, till they were joined by the rest of the party, busied herself in caressing her handsome favourite.

“ I will lead the way,” said Alford advancing, “ and I hope you have ordered a splendid *dejeuner à la fourchette*, as the papers have it, for I have an idea I am hungry. Come Bran! my fine fellow! come along!”

“ Oh! pray come in dog!” said Mr. Dormer in no very amiable tone; “ you need not fear me; I shall not again endeavour to keep you from your mistress.”

But the dog still stood outside the door, looking at Helen with an appealing look, yet not venturing to come in.

“ I doubt if Bran would fear you, if you made the attempt; but he knows he never enters the house,” and she stepped back, and shut the door unaided by Dormer.

“ I am amazed, Miss St. Maur. I thought Bran was such a favourite that his privileges were unbounded.”

“ You do not understand me, Mr. Dormer: even my greatest favourites must be restrained within due bounds. Bran would be an uncouth

visitor for a drawing-room; and I do not acknowledge, at least to its full extent, that love makes us blind."

The flood of passion rushed to cheek and brow, as, afraid of trusting himself to speak, he bowed with ironical humility. Neither these or his flashing eye and curled lip, were unmarked by Helen, and for one instant her cheek paled as she gazed at his fierce anger; the next it almost equalled the crimson flush of his, and deeply hurt and offended at the interpretation she saw he had put upon her words, she passed with a cold and haughty mien, saying as she did so:

"Allow me to show you the way, Mr. Dormer; your friends wait you in the drawing-room."

He followed her without speaking, but with a demeanour so fierce, that Mrs. Hargrave appeared quite alarmed at the introduction; whilst Alford wondered, and Catherine, as she looked on the still glowing cheeks of both, whispered to Helen, "Have you been boxing Mr. Dormer's ears, or has there been a more gentle salutation? Mrs. Hargrave has almost wondered us old at your delay."

The whisper was, perhaps purposely, rather loud, and Helen fancied it had reached the gentleman's ears, to judge from the look he cast

upon them as he strode towards the window. Whatever might be her feelings at this impertinent speech, she was aware to show distress would be to tempt Catherine to increase it, so she answered her only by a reproving look; and turning to Alford, begged he would ring the bell and order his *dejeuner à la fourchette*.

The bell was rung; a magnificent *dejeuner* ordered by the laughing Alford; and, principally through his exertions, an animated conversation maintained, till refreshments were announced in the dining-room.

“Come! Mrs. Hargrave, let me hand you in;” said Alford, and the old lady, pleased with his attention, forgot her alarm of his friend.

“Mr. Dormer, will you hand Lady Catherine?” said Helen coldly.

It was a command rather than a request, and he felt intended to prevent his becoming her escort. A meaner spirit might have rebelled, but he was too proud to be petty; and too much a man-of-the-world to be rude, except when the fit of passion was full upon him.

“Permit me to offer you the other arm, Miss St. Maur: it were uncourteous to leave you unattended in your own house.”

Surprised at conduct so unexpected, Helen hesitated an instant; then, considering some-



thing was due to him as her guest, she took the proffered arm.

"The atmosphere looks rather dark and threatening," said Lady Catherine, as they passed a window. "Do you think we shall have thunder?" looking rather maliciously from one to the other of her companions.

"Thunder and lightning both," cried Mr. Dormer, provoked beyond all control. "Let your ladyship dread the storm."

"La! Mr. Dormer, you don't say so!" assuming a look of stupid terror. "Then I will ask Alford to go home directly;" and away she galloped through the hall, singing "Oh, Mr. G. Oh, Mr. G."

By no means desirous of a *tête-à-tête* after what had passed, and in Mr. Dormer's present mood, Helen galloped after her friend; saying, "she really must plead with Alford against an instant departure."

"Catherine," whispered she, as they entered the room together, "if you have one good feeling left, leave Mr. Dormer in peace!"

"A most complimentary adjuration truly! but I really cannot listen to it, my dear; I provoke Mr. Dormer on principle, that you may know what you have to expect."

"I ought to thank you for your disinterested kindness," colouring deeply, "but I should

think the exhibition might take place with greater propriety in any other house than mine, where common politeness demands I should be more courteous than elsewhere."

"So it would," said Catherine, suddenly changing her mind: "so I will wait till our ride has recommenced: unless indeed you should provoke me by being too courteous."

"No situation, it appears, Lady Catherine Alford, can be depended on as a shield against your insults. You are at liberty to act as you please."

"Now will I spare him and you too, at least for the present, for the proud dignity of that speech. I am better and worse than they think me," and she pressed Helen's hand.

Miss St. Maur's hostess was perfect. Mr. Dormer's wishes were foreseen and supplied; but there was a proud courtesy in her manner towards him, that shewed she only wanted more fitting opportunity to prove her displeasure.

"Perhaps Mr. Dormer would like to see the pictures and the gardens? Will you be kind enough to show them, aunt; or shall I depute Alford?"

"I will go," said Mrs. Hargrave.

"Thank you, aunt; and now to business with my steward."

When Helen rejoined the party, they had again assembled in the dining-room. Catherine was for once making herself agreeable to Mrs. Hargrave. Dormer, still in ill humour, was pretending to examine a picture, and Alford was throwing eatable after eatable out of the window to Bran, who seemed by no means displeased with the amusement.

“Your dog is half starved, Helen; he has already devoured a whole chicken, with a due proportion of bread, (for I was very particular about that), and a dozen tarts; yet is ready for more.”

“Surely you cannot have been giving him such things!”

“Surely I have; though Dormer refused to hand the dish, and abused pampered favorites. Love me, love my dog; that is the ground I stand upon.”

All things considered, this was rather a *mal-a-propos* speech, and Catherine fully enjoyed it.

“Mr. Dormer acted judiciously,” replied Helen, calmly; “and I dislike pampered favourites as much as he can do. Love may lose half its value by being injudicious, and I doubt if the housekeeper will much approve of the destination of her tarts; besides, Bran is not accustomed to eat what the sick would be glad of.”

“ Oh, nonsense ! he shall have these three, and finish the dish.”

“ Indeed he must not. My credit is at stake, and my fondness for the dog evil spoken of.”

She took the dish from his hands as she spoke, and placed it on the table.

“ Now, Catherine, I am at your service, to escort you whither you please.”

“ Then, if you have finished your strictures on pampered favorites, the which shall be duly repeated to Tourment, I think we had better return, lest we should be favoured with the predicted storm, for it still looks threatening, and I am nervous.”

“ As you please ; you know me too well to think I alluded to Tourment. I am going to shut up Bran, and will order the horses.”

“ Could you not allow a servant to do that, Miss St. Maur ? ” inquired Mr. Dormer, as he and Alford accompanied her.

“ My fondness for Bran has won from him a more perfect obedience than he will show to another. If I shut him up he will understand at once he is not to go ; were another to do it, he might be inclined to dispute the point, or at least fret about it.”

He said nothing, but immediately after she saw him with pleasure attempt to pat the dog. But Bran was not to be coaxed, and looked

surly; though he fondled on Alford immediately after. Mr. Dormer ceased his endeavours, and looked prouder than ever.

On their return, Helen, to prevent all conversation with Dormer, contrived to ride between Catherine and her brother, and to engage the former in an earnest conversation.

“The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men  
Gang aft agly;”

and Helen’s plans might hope no better fate. Just as they reached the village the clouds, which had darkened the natural atmosphere as much as passion had obscured the mental, burst over their heads.

“To the Jones’s,” cried Alford, seizing Helen’s bridle.

The shower promised to be heavy—Alford was peremptory—indeed, there was no time to dispute, and within five minutes they were all safely housed in Eglantine Cottage, the flurried maid having ushered them into the best parlour.

In a room about fourteen feet square, were crowded toys, trifles, and trumpery of every description. Alum baskets of every colour imaginable and unimaginable, filled with artificial flowers, whose rather faded hues looked sentimental, ornamented the chimney-piece, and some of the tables, interspersed with small figures of Paul Pry, Buy a Broom, and German

dolls in the full splendours of imbecilles, oreilles d'eliphans, volans, biais, and bérêts, supported and flanked by allumettieres, stuffed with various coloured paper contortions. On a small table in a corner stood

“ Lilies and roses and non-smelling posies,”

of wax-work, vis-a-vised by a Bazaar group; the minuteness of whose decorations ever excited the admiration of equally minute minds.

“ For still the wonder grew,

How mortal hands such tiny things could do.”

Feather and rice baskets, scattered about, contained fossils, minerals, metals, and ores, natural and unnatural. Poonahed screens and card racks hung against the walls, and Poonahed footstools encumbered the floor. Albums filled and to be filled; a French almanack, an old “ Forget me Not,” and a new “ Keep-sake,” with some flowers and butterflies more brilliant than nature, were scattered in elegant negligence on the principal table. To save the carpet, according to Mrs. Jones,—or to languidize the light into a voluptuous shadow, according to Miss Jones,—thick muslin curtains excluded every ray of sunshine, had the storm allowed of such appearing. The piano was open, and

“ Believe me if all those endearing young charms,”

was displayed on the stand. In short, so full was the room one only thing seemed to have been forgotten in it, namely, that it was ever to be inhabited by any thing less aerial than a butterfly. All was sentimental, nothing comfortable. True there were chairs in the room ; but what with the horror of overturning little painted tumblers and great painted jars, rice flowers and china lambs, he must have had a daring spirit who could have ventured to seat himself without trembling, and shrinking into as small a compass as possible. Such was Alford's description of the room to his mother.

"How could you think of bringing me here, Alford?" said his sister, as she threw herself on a sofa, in such a careless manner as to send some of the Poonah butterflies flying through the room. "The cave of Trophonius were nothing to this den of sentimental rubbish."

"Den of sentimental rubbish, indeed ! Why it is an exact model of the lovely Susan's own mind."

"You are right ; a complication of follies, a confused multitude of silly nothings, a trashy scrap-book !"

"Oh no ! a beautifully-varied Album. But dear me, Helen, here have I been defending *la belle Susanne*, and neglecting to provide a seat for *la plus belle Helene*. To which of

these beautiful ingenuities will you play vis a vis?"

" ' Baron of Bucklivie, may the foul fiend drive thee,  
And a' to pieces rive thee,  
For building sic a town ;  
Where there 's neither horse meat nor man's meat,  
Nor a chair to sit down, ' "

repeated Catherine, laughing at his difficulty in seating Helen and himself; but still retaining the whole of her sofa.

Mr. Dormer looked round in contemptuous silence, and took his station at the window; that favourite retreat of the sullen.

"Take care of your heart, Dormer," said Alford. "The lovely Susan must be preparing for conquest."

"I am invulnerable!" answered he haughtily. "Not to be won by a toy, however beautiful, or a being as changeable as change itself;" and he glanced towards Helen.

"Treason! treason! treason!" cried Alford. To what punishment do you doom him, ladies, for this satire on your sex. The youngest must speak first; so come, Helen, no refusal; you shall pronounce his doom. What shall it be?"

"A full and free pardon, to shame him, if that be possible, into more noble conduct."

"There is generosity, Dormer! Down on



one knee man, confess your error, and return thanks."

"I must not accept the pardon Miss St. Maur would accord, since I cannot change an opinion as easily as some."

"The pardon was granted unconditionally. We care not whether your opinions change or not; the shame and the sorrow of retaining one so unjust, must remain with yourself."

"Well, and proudly answered, Helen; and now, sister, for your doom. See how abashed the culprit looks."

"Abashed! he seems to me more like some dire enchanter who, robbed of his magic wand, strives to look us into stone. Yes, it is so! the wand and the power have passed from his hands; they are mine, and his doom shall be said." She rose as she uttered these words, and, waving a stick of *les Graces* which lay near her, continued with a look and manner worthy an ancient Pythoness. "The spell of pride and of passion be upon you through life and till death. She you would win—she whom you love shall shrink from and shun you—your lip shall smile, but your heart shall weep—you shall gain power to know its nothingness—have flatterers to learn their hollowness—love friends to feel their falseness—win popularity to find it fleeting as change itself. The spell of blighted ambition,

of pride, and of passion, be upon you ; till, mid the wreck of all things else, you turn to woman's love, and know her what she is. What think you of this, Helen ?" changing her tone and attitude in an instant to listless indifference, as she again sunk yawning on the sofa, "I think I acted Sibyl to perfection. The Cumean was nothing to me."

"Indeed you did," said her brother ; "Helen is amazed and Dormer astounded !"

For once his statement was not exaggerated. Words, look, and attitude, had been so wild and impassioned, that it was difficult to imagine her only in sport ; whilst her sudden transition to careless, and as it seemed natural indifference, might have puzzled the most penetrating observer. That she should have startled and surprised the other two was nothing so very extraordinary ; but that Dormer, the proud, the self-possessed, should own the power of acting, if acting it was, proved a triumph indeed.

For some moments after she had ceased, he neither spoke or moved ; but, though the darkness of the room, and his back being to the window, prevented his companions from reading clearly the expression of his countenance, still enough was discernible to prove

that Catherine's spell had not been uttered in vain.

"You are avenged, ladies!" cried Alford in surprise; "the traitor's doom is sealed!"

His friend started at the words, then recovered himself by a violent effort, and bowed haughtily to the modern Sibyl, as he said, "Lady Catherine Alford is an inimitable actress; but she has yet to learn that I defy her charms, and scorn her spells."

A change came over that lady's features. Her cheek blanched to a marble whiteness, then glowed like a crimson cloud; but Helen alone marked this unusual emotion, yet wondered not at it, as the bitterness of his tone had scarcely less effect on her who had not provoked it. She remembered not at the moment the difference of their characters. A gloom fell on the little party, and all felt relieved when Mrs. and Miss Jones entered the room; both ladies exhibiting strong marks of haste in their adornment. The best dress of the mother, huddled on in honour of such distinguished guests, was put on awry; whilst the minutely arranged ringlets of the sentimental blonde, bore evident marks of cramping. Still was their presence most warmly welcomed by at least three of the party; and even Catherine

forgot her dislike, in the change of conversation their entrance occasioned.

"I consider this is a most fortunate shower, since it has furnished an excuse for our paying you a visit. We were all dying to come and see you, but, as you had not called at Marston, feared it would not be etiquette," began Lord Alford, almost before Mrs. Jones had entered the apartment."

"Oh, la ! your lordship is so good," replied the simpering lady, curtsying very low, "I am sure I should be quite shocked to think we had been at all wanting in respect to her ladyship ; and we should have called before, but we thought, as her ladyship only came down on Friday, she might be busy unpacking."

Lady Catherine's lip curled with contempt at the idea ; but Mrs. Jones perceived it not, and continued :

"I am sure, my lord, I am exceedingly sorry ; I hope her ladyship is not offended. I will call to-morrow and say how it was ; and Susy shall call on Lady Catherine."

"Ay, do ! Catherine would scarcely come here, and she looks offended now," said he, laughing mischievously at his sister's annoyance.

"Dear me ! your lordship does not say so. What shall I do ?" and what with deciding

which should receive the lowest reverence, Lady Catherine Alford with a title, and five hundred a year; or Miss St. Maur without a title, and ten thousand a year; and the answering his civil speeches, the poor woman was, as she told her daughter afterwards, quite in a maze. As usual, fear triumphed over love, and Lady Catherine, with her proud looks, gained the day over Miss St. Maur, with her sweet smile; and, after a due depth of reverence, she began a tiresome and fulsome apology to the titled lady, much to her vexation and the amusement of Alford. But Lady Catherine was not a person to submit to any thing annoying, if she could possibly relieve herself from the infliction; without rising from the sofa, she cut short the good lady's harangue, by assuring her, in a very brusque manner, that no offence whatever had been felt at her not calling, and desiring she would on no account put herself to any inconvenience by paying an early visit.

This speech was intelligible even to the obtuse Mrs. Jones, who shrank back abashed, and could not recover her equanimity for some time; though Helen, to dispel her chagrin, talked to her with even more than her usual politeness. Seeing Catherine had destroyed all further amusement in that quarter, Alford turned to

the daughter, paying her the most extravagant compliments, which she received with more than their due of gratitude. "Go where I will, Miss Jones, I can never see a room so filled as this. Here the loveliness of nature is surpassed by the inimitable ingenuities of art. On whichever side I turn my eyes, the most beautiful specimens of the delicate workmanship of lovely woman's hands meet my enraptured vision. Who would not be a butterfly, to be rendered immortal by your glowing pencil? Who would not become a bee, and furnish wax to be moulded by those delicate fingers into such admirable mockeries of the odorous decorations of the parterre? What a paradise you have created around you! rich in beauty! redolent in grace! Then that album, whose heart-moving, spirit-stirring contents, one moment rouse the mind to all the glorious daring of some high emprise, then melt it into the languishment of hopeless love, or the luxuriousness of delicious repose! That one could but throw off the galling chain of pomp and pride, and all the panoply of state, and dwell in such a paradise as this, with some fair Eve, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.' Do you not revel in this bower of delights?"

"Oh yes, indeed!" replied the gratified Susan, throwing down her "speaking blue eyes, shaded

by their silken lashes," as she herself wrote to her friend, one possessed of a kindred mind. "I love to recline near the open casement, at the balmy evening hour, when the gaudy glare of day has passed away, and the soul subduing silence is only broken by the heart thrilling notes of the eastern bulbul, pouring forth his strain of enraptured love to the glowing rose, whose drooping flower, distilling dew, whispers her sympathy with her adorer."

"Sweet enthusiast! How few can feel as you do!"

"Oh no, my lord: it is the torture of my sad fate to meet with few who can comprehend the sensitive intensity of my feelings, or riot in the exquisite ecstasies that thrill my bosom, whilst luxuriating on nature's beauties, or trembling at the touch of dissolving poesy. But there are some minds, who, soaring above the cold formalities of life, can climb the mountain height, and, melting into the ethereal clouds——"

"Susy, my dear," said her mother, interrupting this splendid flight of fancy, "I am afraid Jane has forgotten about the cake; do just go and see." In vain all protested they wanted no cake, Susy was obliged to go, and Alford compelled to imagine the conclusion of the young lady's most unintelligible sublimity. The daughter being gone, he turned again to the mother

for amusement, but, though unable to avoid smiling at Susan's folly, Helen too highly disapproved of his conduct to give him any encouragement, and kept Mrs. Jones so completely engaged in conversation, that his lordship was obliged to be quiet. The entrance of Susan with Jane and the cake, occasioned a little bustle, during which Mrs. Jones whispered an enquiry as to the strange gentleman up in the window."

"What do you think of him?" was the answer. "The gentleman looks very black; perhaps he is affronted because I have not spoken to him: but I think I spoke to him once before, and he looked quite as black then, and would not give me an answer; and, as nobody talked to him, I did not know whether he was a friend of yours or not."

"I will introduce you, and pray consider him as my friend, or no, as you please."

"Mrs. Jones, Mr. Percy Dormer!" said he, advancing towards his friend, followed by the lady;" though perhaps this introduction is quite unnecessary, as Mrs. Jones says she thinks you are the black gentleman whom she met a few days since."

"Mrs. Jones does me too much honour," turning full upon her with a look that nearly annihilated the poor woman, and threatened the demolition of sundry pet pieces of handiwork, arranged



on a small table, which she had nearly overturned in her haste to retreat. The terror of Mrs. Jones—the horror of Miss Jones—at her mother's having called the sublime looking stranger the “black gentleman;” and the hauteur of that superb personage himself, formed too ridiculous a combination to be resisted. Catherine and her brother indulged in a hearty laugh; and the latter always maintained that Helen did more than smile.

*La belle Susanne*, vexed beyond expression, stept hastily forward to apologise in her most bewitching manner, and, in her haste threw down a large green jar, which rolling against the maid, who was handing the cake and wine, so startled her as to occasion the overthrow of all the contents of the waiter. Away rolled plates, glasses, decanters, and jar, amid the terrified exclamations of mistress and maid, and renewed shouts of laughter from Alford and his sister.

Dormer disdained even a smile, but gazing on the whole scene in contemptuous silence, looked, as Catherine between her fits of laughter whispered Helen, very like the “black gentleman” to whom Mrs. Jones had likened him. Our heroine, who was vexed with herself for joining in the merriment, soon repressed her mirth, and sought to repair as much as possible the mischief done. Catherine, on the contrary, springing from the sofa declared the weather was quite

fine ; called on Mr. Dormer to attend her, and thanking Mrs. Jones for a most entertaining visit, departed in haste, desiring Helen and Alford to follow immediately. Lady Catherine and Mr. Dormer had proceeded some way ere they were joined by their companions. Not a word had passed between them ; but this was not extraordinary, as Lady Catherine seldom spoke to her brother's friend, save for the purpose of annoying him, and he rarely addressed the lady from inclination.

"Well, Alford," said his sister as he gained her side ; "any new amusement ? Mr. Dormer is most anxious to hear the termination of the scene. You cannot imagine how it entertained him ; so much so indeed, he would have lingered still, had I not claimed his attendance. Oh it was irresistible ! and I forgive you for taking me there. Mr. Dormer is most anxious to learn what resemblance Mrs. Jones could see between him and a certain personage," and she looked at him maliciously.

"The resemblance is only in your fertile imagination, Catherine, and I am loaded with apologies to Mr. Dormer for the mistake ; and for which I more than suspect Alford is answerable. They dine with me next week, and I have half promised your forgiveness, Mr. Dormer. Have I been too bold ?"

"I hope Miss St. Maur does not suppose such a woman as that capable of exciting my anger?" he replied, only half mollified even by her sweetness, as he still recollected she had joined in the laugh.

"Then what, in the name of all that is sentimental! as *la belle Susanne* would say, had ruffled your temper? for I am sure you looked black enough to justify her mother's mistake," said Alford.

"It is all over now," thought Helen, "and I have played peace maker in vain."

"The folly and the changeableness of others," replied his friend, too much provoked to be polite, and anxious even in his own mind to lay the blame on any but himself.

"Your own had of course no share in causing such an unusual occurrence," remarked Catherine, with even more than her usual bitterness. "At any rate, we thank you for your polite inuendo. Oh, for the days of our grandmothers when politeness was as indispensable to gentleman, as his sword and queue."

"I suspect our revered grandmothers would have been shocked at our degeneracy, had they come forth and seen our proceedings to day," said Helen, anxious to prevent a reply from Dormer, and restore good humour to all. "For my part, I am as shocked at myself, as my

grandmother could have been for me, at laughing so unmercifully at poor Mrs. Jones."

"Indeed! Well, I think Mr. Dormer's superb look at her want of penetration was sufficient excuse! But pray why did you linger behind then, if not to enjoy the scene a little longer?"

"You know me better, Catherine."

"What! did Miss Propriety stay behind then to make amends for our evil deeds?"

"Very much like it, despite your laughter."

"And you give her a dinner as a peace offering? If I had not such a *canaille*-phobia, I would assist at the entertainment."

"Thank you! but in that case it might be more piquante than would suit the simple tastes of my guests."

"So really, dear good girl! you have had the magnanimity to become the scape-goat for our offences. But are you quite sure your good resolves will not evaporate in the course of time, and that you will not take to your bed on the fatal day?"

"Mock as you please: you will neither move me to anger or change."

"Change! Not even an opinion? Did you ever change in your life?" turning round, and fixing her penetrating eyes on her face.

"Yes, my dear,—colour, more than twice for you; when your impertinence has become intolerable."

For once, the piercing eyes of Catherine fell beneath the steady gaze of her friend, if friends they could be called, but recovering herself instantly, she said, assuming an air of superiority : “ *Courage, ma chere petite !* with a few more of my instructions you really may become a witling. I had no idea you could have uttered any thing so severe, and begin to have hopes of you.”

“Would I could say the same for you !” said Helen gaily and kindly, for the feeling that had roused her to check her impertinence had been subdued, and the irony of her companion wounded her not. “ *Votre pauvre petite* has no ambition to become a witling ; so you need not dread a rival.”

Again Catherine fixed her penetrating eyes on her friend’s face ; but all there was calm, lovely, and open ; and she turned again to her brother. “Alford, lithograph the scene of Helen appeasing those intolerables.”

“I dare not. Helen has already given me one long lecture, and I have promised to be a good boy for the future. Enough that Helen looked like an angel ; I like a fool ; and Mrs. and Miss Jones forgot the demolition of glass, china, &c. even your laughter and Dormer’s disdain, whilst listening to her dulcet tones. The only laughable thing, for *la belle Susanne* felt and looked but did not speak, was, that poor Mrs.

Jones made such a lowly reverence I feared she would never rise again."

"Do you mean to become as demure as herself?"

"No fear of that, my piquante sister: it required all her admonishing looks to keep me from sentimentalising whilst she played *l'aimable*."

"And on what plea did she blame you?"

"Rather a reasonable one, though not of the newest fashion.

'Be you to others kind and true,  
As you'd have others be to you;  
And neither say, nor do to men,  
Whate'er you would not take again.'

Thus runs the old lay, if I remember, that we used to repeat in our days of innocence."

"Pshaw! I have laid all such old saws aside with my sampler; only to be bought forth again for the edification of some future nephew and niece. Take care! or Helen may remind you of another old saw. 'That example is better than precept.'"

"Then I must furnish her with a modern instance to the contrary."

"But pray, has she convinced you of the unpardonable guilt of laughing at the follies of others?"

"She convinced me, at least for the time, of the impropriety of nourishing and increasing those follies for our amusement; and spoke so eloquently, and pleaded so sweetly, that I have

half made a vow to encourage wisdom rather than folly ; and to seek to reform, rather than ridicule."

"Oh, then 'Othello's occupation's gone!' and you will soon become as complete a *precieuse ridicule* as your reprover."

"Hear Helen for herself."

"No, I thank you ! one lecture for one day is surely enough ;" and striking her horse, it started into a canter.

Alford's steed, unwilling to be outdone, followed ; and Helen, unexpectedly, and much against her inclination, found herself alone with Mr. Dormer ; and, before her horse could change its pace, his hand was on her rein.

"Why is Miss St. Maur so careful to spare the feelings of all but one ! Why is he alone to be unforgiven ? Is this just ?"

There was an earnestness in this appeal, which surprised and confused her ; but she tried to answer with carelessness.

"This is rather a grave charge, and I am not inclined to allow its justice ; but, if I were so, what can you expect from one of that sex, who are more changeable than change itself."

"Here is proof of the justice of my charge," and he coloured highly ; "whilst you forget or disregard the idle words of others, you remember with displeasure all of mine. Why is that one alone to be unforgiven ?"

“What if that one have more deeply offended?”

“But what if he have repented more deeply still?”

“Will you avouch he has done so?”

“Will you forgive him, if I so avouch? Surely his offence was not so heinous?”

“Do you plead for justice or forgiveness, Mr. Dormer?” The altered tone of this last question startled him.

There was a moment's struggle, but pride yielded; and he replied in a deep earnest voice: “For forgiveness! Will you not grant it?”

“It is granted!” she said in a low sweet voice, turning away from those bright eyes that spoke their thanks.

Before she was aware her hand was pressed between both his; but the next moment she had given her horse the rein, and, followed by Dormer, was hastening to rejoin the party.

“Were I any one but Lady Catherine Alford, I should envy you that brilliant colour, Helen. How did you get it? was it the ride? or have the gentlemen been doing the gallant?”

“Either one you please,” replied Alford, marking the increased glow on his favourite's cheek, whilst Helen entered the house, trying to appear as though she had not heard the question.



## CHAPTER VII.

To woman, whose best books are human hearts,  
Wise heaven a genius less profound imparts.  
His awful! Her's is lovely; his should tell  
How thunderbolts, and her's how roses fell.  
Her rapid mind decides while he debates,  
She feels a truth that he but calculates.  
He, provident, averts approaching ill,  
She snatches present good with ready skill.  
That active perseverance his, which gains.  
And her's that passive patience which sustains.  
Winds shatter oaks, while osiers wave secure;  
Seas waste the rock, while yielding sands endure;  
And gentle woman, to her fate resigned,  
Prevails o'er woes that vanquish stern mankind.

WOMAN.

——— Well,

I see you are the master of the house.

I will accommodate myself to you.

FAUST.

THE storm of the morning was but the fore-runner of the storm of the evening. The air became oppressive—vivid flashes of lightning lit up the most distant corners of the large apartment—and made the room appear one

blaze of liquid flame. The roar of the thunder followed almost instantaneously on the flash of the lightning—the wind moaned in hollow gusts among the trees, yet scarcely moved the heavy black clouds that obscured the sky—large drops fell occasionally, with a dull plashing sound—and the whole scene was as sublime as a summer storm could be. Helen sat at one of the windows watching its awful beauty.

“How comes this?” said Catherine, who had been looking at her for some time. “I thought you were no admirer of storms.”

“You are mistaken then ; I admire nature under every form. ‘Looking through nature up to nature’s God.’”

“I fancied I had heard you declaim, more than once, on the calm beauty of a placid summer’s evening.”

“Very likely ; for, though I may delight in Scott, surely I may admire Milton also.”

“Very intellectually answered, but I suspect you like change as well as your neighbours.”

“I have no doubt I find variety as charming as others.”

“I do not clearly comprehend the distinction between change and variety. Do you mean to say you equally admire the storm and the sunshine ? and think one heightens the beauty of the other ?”

“Yes!” answered Helen, carelessly, too much absorbed in contemplating the beauty of the scene without, to pay much attention to her companion within.

“I thought as much,” said Catherine ironically. “In that case you need not have been so indignant at my asking if you could change.”

“In what case, Catherine? I don’t understand you.”

“Not the accusative; so you need not colour like a milk-maid; but the possessive, I conclude, to judge by what I saw when I looked back to discover if you and Mr. Percy Dormer were following. Nay, never look foolish! if young gentlemen will do such things, how can young ladies prevent them?”

“If I blush, Lady Catherine, it is for you more than myself,” replied Helen, roused by her words. “I despise hints and insinuations, and this will not be our first quarrel on that subject. If you have any thing to ask, ask it—any thing to say, say it,—but play not the secret assassin—wound not in the dark.”

For some moments the two young women stood fronting each other, looking as though to read the inmost thoughts. The gaze of both was steady and unshrinking, yet was neither

free from emotion. Helen would have served Catherine to her power's extent; rarely retorted, and never intentionally wounded; but though she had been her playfellow from childhood, she could never feel any confidence in her. Catherine's feeling towards her, to judge from her conduct, were scarcely so friendly, but then she was always enigmatical.

Though Catherine generally assumed an air of superiority over her companion, who, conscious of her own powers, rarely resented her domineering tone; she had found more than once, if roused to exertion, there was a calm dignity, a candour and firmness about Helen, that always gave her the mastery over her opponent. These trials of power were never sought by Helen, and had of late been rather avoided by Catherine; who, warned by former defeats, kept within some bounds, but now it seemed as though some motive, far more strong than usual, had urged her on till retreat was almost impossible. The same feeling, whatever it might be, banished her usual tone of cool but bitter irony, and rendered her whole manner passionate and impetuous.

Finding she obtained no answer, and still anxious as ever to avoid any contention, Helen said, "If this encounter of the eyes will satisfy you, Catherine, so much the better; I would

always avert an encounter of tongues, for they are sharp weapons, and require consummate skill to wield them wisely ; and when once unsheathed may chance to inflict wounds no leech can heal. Suppose we proclaim a peace," and she held out her hand.

But Catherine took it not. The sweet expression of Helen's countenance seemed rather to strengthen than change her resolve.

"No Helen! no hollow peace!" she exclaimed passionately. "Truces and treaties are for cowards. You bade me ask,—listen and answer! Do you remember saying in this very room, on such another evening, that though storms might vary the face of nature, they were even in their beauty to be dreaded? That the storms of passion were more fearful still; a volcanic mind more to be feared than a volcanic mountain; and that you should prefer in domestic life the monotonous to the stormy? That even the blaze of genius should not blind to the deformity of passion? Do you remember this?"

"It is rather imperious to call upon me to remember words spoken some three years since. I may have said so, but I doubt whether it were not too wise a speech for me to have been its maker."

"At least, you acknowledge its wisdom?"

"Most certainly ! but what then ?"

"Then you can never think of wedding Percy Dormer !"

Helen started ; this conclusion, so triumphantly asserted, was unexpected and confusing ; but again daring the almost stern gaze of her confronter, she answered calmly—

"I have had no thought of wedding Mr. Dormer, though I do not perceive the justice of your conclusion ; for he has many high and noble qualities."

"So you said three days since, judging by intuition, I conclude. Do you still think the same ? Has to day taught you no bitter truths ?"

"You can best answer that question."

"Pshaw ! I never flattered the heiress ; but I would be your friend for once. You understood my question, though others did not. Am I indeed to understand your opinion of Mr. Dormer is unchanged ?"

"I rank Mr. Dormer high above the common herd ; and hold him endowed with very superior abilities, and many splendid virtues."

"Helen ! Helen ! You may deceive yourself, but you cannot deceive me," cried Catherine, still more passionately. "You are wilfully blind—you see the tempest and yet dare its dangers. Be warned ! if you would not perish in the storm. Percy Dormer is not for such

as you—he is the very volcano of which you spoke. Shun him! avoid him!—his violence would crush you—he would despise the softness of your character, when the charm of your beauty had passed away. You would be to him as a toy to a child, thrown aside and neglected—the adulated heiress would sink into the despised wife—you would perish in the war of elements—he would die in the monotony of tranquillity. Helen! again I say be warned. And yet why should I say it? even now you scorn and deride my words. On—on—then to your fate, and the sorrow rest on your own head! Back to the window now, and dream the tempest is your sphere!”

There was something so wild, so passionate, in her voice and look, that Helen was amazed, and almost awed. Then came to remembrance her extraordinary conduct at Mrs. Jones’s—a suspicion flashed across her—the colour went and came; and then, laying her hand on Catherine’s arm, she looked earnestly into her face, with a kind but penetrating gaze. Catherine seemed anxious to avoid the scrutiny—but it might not be—and Helen spoke, despite the haughty look she assumed.

“As you wish the happiness of all concerned, answer me truly! Have you not a deeper mo-

tive than my welfare for your warning? Think of me as a sister—say but yes.”

Totally regardless of the almost affectionate kindness shown by the questioner, Catherine dashed away the hand that rested on her arm ; stepped back a few paces, whilst the flashing of her eyes contrasted strongly with the deathlike hue of her complexion, and her voice quivered with passion as she spoke.

“ Miss St. Maur, you are avenged ! What have you seen in Lady Catherine Alford that you should deem her mean enough to stoop to give her love unasked ? Has she so wooed the notice of the gentleman, that you take her for a lovelorn damsel ? Be not alarmed, you have no rival to dread in me ! ”

“ I dread no rival,” replied Helen warmly, indignant at the insinuation.

“ You are secure then ! and only wished to triumph over my weakness. I thank you. I dreamt not of such prompt decision, and my warning has been late ; but my prediction will come true ; ” and she turned to leave the room.

“ Stay, Lady Catherine ! and hear me ! ”

“ No ! I cannot stay to talk about the wedding now. You can consult Sir Charles Grandison, and take Harriet Byron for your model, and Garnette shall dress your hair,” said she, still advancing to the door.



“Catherine, I will be heard;” and Helen stood before her. “You shall not thus shelter yourself under the mask of folly.”

Catherine seemed half inclined to force a passage, and the expression of her countenance, so completely at variance with the late assumed carelessness of her tone, had well nigh induced Helen to allow her to depart; but the expression changed the instant she saw it was observed, and throwing herself listlessly into a chair, she answered—

“What must be, must be; so pray let us have the whole scene. It will be sublime to a degree.”

“I have no scene to relate.”

“You need not be shy about it, my dear; we saw him kiss your hand, and you allow you dread no rival.”

“You saw no such thing; and if I dread no rival it is because there is no matter for rivalry. I meant not to wound you by my question; and pardon me if I say it was the best excuse that could be made for your violence. If your warnings were meant in kindness, I thank you; if not, I scorn the predictions or the Sibyl, though she performed her part inimitably. The softness of my character cannot, and shall not, induce me to yield my judgment to the prejudice of one whose strange

conduct is, to say the best of it, inexplicable. And now having heard my explanation and decision, you may depart ;” and she moved from the door.

“ Who has your permission to depart ?” asked Alford, entering the room at the moment, and marking with surprise the stately step of one lady and the compressed lip and indignant frown of the other. “ What is the matter, my most sublime sister ? Are you preparing to enact the Sibyl again for Dormer’s edification ? Here he is, just in time.”

“ No Alford ! I am weary now. I have been enacting a play for Helen’s amusement, and performed my part so admirably that the simple one believed me in earnest ; and whilst I only sought a little fencing with foils, she had well nigh converted our intended mock encounter into a real and deadly fight. Do go and appease her.”

“ He need not trouble himself,” said Helen, who had turned round in amaze at the bold assertion. “ I am perfectly aware of the nature of our combat, and deserve as much credit for good acting as yourself.”

“ I doubt it not,” said Alford, who saw there was more meant than met the ear, “ since you always act with propriety, whilst Catherine sometimes o’ersteps the modesty of nature.”

“ A perfect judgment, thou most impartial judge, who decidest without hearing either side. A polite brother, they say, is a black swan ; and I have no right to expect such a rarity. I leave you, Helen, to perfect yourself in the retort courteous against our next encounter ; but let not my warning be in vain.”

“ Are you not alarmed at the lightning, Miss St. Maur,” asked Dormer, as he took his station beside her at the window.

“ No ! not alarmed ; though I can scarcely describe the feeling it does excite. It is not fear, nor pleasure ; but a sort of awful delight—a something to be felt—not told. The feeling awakened by sublime poetry, describing some fearful doom or some momentous crisis, most nearly resembles it, though far, very far inferior. Alford laughs, and classes me with his favourite Susan, I guess ; so I must hush my raptures.”

*“ La même chose souvent est dans la bouche d’une femme d’esprit, une naïveté, ou un bon mot ; et dans celle d’une sotte une sottise.”*

“ Comme les absens ont toujours tort, I suppose I must express due gratitude for the compliment.”

Before Alford could reply a summons came from his father, to which after various strugglings and grumblings he at length paid obedience.

“ I sometimes wonder,” said Dormer, “ how Alford and I ever came to be friends, for, I believe, there is scarcely one point of sympathy between us. His gaiety almost approaches to levity ; my gravity almost descends to gloom. Our friendship is to me a strange anomaly, to be wondered at but never explained.”

“ I may not be so arrogant as to pretend an explanation of what you have asserted is inexplicable ; but I do not think you have stated the matter fairly. In contrasting, with some exaggeration, two qualities, you have forgotten how the general characters may assimilate. Alford’s levity, if you will have it so, is tempered and thrown into shade by his many virtues ; and your gloom, since you will call it thus, is redeemed, if your friend’s penetration may be relied on, by great and noble qualities. Both would tread the same bright path of virtue and honour.”

He neither disclaimed or thanked her for her praise, for it was no idle or insincere compliment. He felt too it was totally different from the adulation and flattery to which he had so long been accustomed ; and which, while he believed he viewed, and perhaps really did view with contempt, was yet, from the force of habit, partly expected and almost desired. His looks alone showed his pleasure, and those Helen

saw not, for she was again looking out on the storm. The conversation was too agreeable to be discontinued, and Dormer replied—

“ Believe me, I am too much Alford’s friend not to be inclined to do his virtues justice, and if I said levity it was in gaiety, not in malice; still I am at a loss to account for our friendship. The more so as it was a matter of choice rather than chance; and I am inclined to think that a similarity of manners or pursuits is more frequently the foundation of friendship than a similarity in morals.”

“ Granted, among the vain and frivolous, if any thing they can feel deserves the name of friendship; but not in minds of a higher stamp. If I remember rightly, and I should do so, for Alford never wearies of the tale, you saved his life at the imminent risk of your own; and that just after, provoked at your lofty bearing, he had exerted all his powers of tormenting. From that moment regret and gratitude made him resolve to make you his friend. You tried to shun him, but he would not be shunned; till he at last gained your friendship. Something in the same way by which De Rocca won de Stael; declaring he would love her so well she would not be able to refuse him. Such is Alford’s tale.”

“ Though it contains much truth, it contains

not all the truth. Alford has omitted his devotion to me, during a long illness, and all the *brusqueries* with which I met his advances."

"Do not believe me ignorant of those *brusqueries*," said she, archly. "They were the slighter touches which served to fill up the first rough sketch, and place you as a perfect picture on my mind's canvass, in all its variety of light and shade, form and colouring."

"Indeed! and I so ignorant of the honour. But perhaps such ignorance was for my happiness; I might have quarrelled with my own portrait."

"Scarcely with such as I had drawn it from Alford's description. If my memory does not play me false, at the sage age of sixteen your station was a little, a very little lower than some of our favourite heroes; nay, I am not quite sure, that we did not endow you with all the qualities—the noblest, the best, and the bravest to be found in our youthful idols; or whether we did not even give you precedence over Bayard and Bruce; Wallace and Sobieski."

"Then I am to understand that, at the sager age of twenty, you bid me descend from the heroship to which in your days of delusion you had elevated me; thus, making me exemplify the disagreeable truth, that no man is a hero

to his *valet-de-chambre*; or, in more poetic phrase, that distance is the element of sublimity. Happy for me if Alford had never elevated your expectations; still happier, if by failing to obtain the introduction so eagerly desired, I had not, by the dull reality of my presence, defaced the splendid picture of your imagination! Then might I still have lived in your mind glowing with all the virtues of a Bayard."

One would have thought her words might have pleased the most unreasonable; but the tone of pique in which this was said, showed he could ill brook the being thought less than perfection, even in playfulness.

"I am not going to be lured into a complimentary speech, Mr. Dormer; nor am I going to quarrel with you for the slight estimation in which you hold our introduction; but, I will simply say, had you been Bayard himself, and nothing lower it seems will content you, there must have been at twenty some abatement in the homage of sixteen. All colours fade from time, and feelings and impressions fade like them. The first impressions on a young mind are deep and vivid, and retain for some time a great portion of their original strength; but to one just opening into life, impressions, ideas, thoughts, and feelings, follow each other in

rapid succession like the waves of the sea ; remembered only as things that have been and are not, or it may be unremembered at all ; no trace left on the sandy beach over which they flowed ; and though a ninth wave may occasionally come, leaving a deeper track behind, still the succession of minor waves must soon lessen the impression. Besides, youth is the season of exaggeration and confidence. The beautiful is more than beautiful—a garden a paradise—a hill a mountain—an inland lake the boundless sea—and an officer in his Majesty's service a hero ! To the young it seems impossible to doubt or change ; but, at my sober age," and she smiled her own sweet playful smile, "we are wiser. In former days it would have been nothing short of treason to have hinted at an error in any of my favourites ; and now I sometimes doubt if there ever were such beings. In these days of stereotypes and steam engines, when elephants are actors, and chins musical instruments ; one is inclined, in the pride of the present, to look back with contempt on the past, and hold its worthies, even with my Lord Monboddo, as little better than monkies with their tails cut off. Then the new histories of the olden times, which appear every day, so completely falsify the accounts of the ancients, that I am almost become a convert



to the opinion, that history is but an accredited fiction, not more true, and less amusing, than the 'History of Jack the Giant Killer,' and his no less renowned namesake, the hero of the 'Beanstalk.' "

"Then I may perhaps, though no longer allowed to stand next to Bayard in your estimation, be permitted to take my place somewhat below the renowned 'Jack the Giant Killer.' "

"*Le Roi s'y avisera!*" and again her playful smile beamed upon him, and checked his rising ill humour.

"But we have strangely wandered from the subject matter of our discourse, to speak fashionably, or parliamentarily, I should say, only young ladies would not be supposed to know there was such a thing as a Parliament, were there not a few sentences about it in the History of England and Goldsmith's Geography, written for the use of schools. I forget whether we had accounted satisfactorily for the friendship of yourself and Alford."

"I own I was not quite satisfied on that point. I cannot understand how Alford, who has generally but little perseverance, persisted in overcoming my dislike; or how we can feel such a regard for each other, when our opinions clash on almost every subject."

“Give Alford a sufficient motive, and he can be as persevering as Charles XII. himself; or any other hero, ancient or modern; and his gratitude sufficed on that occasion. Besides, you were almost the only person whose dignity proved some slight check to his raillery, and your open dislike piqued him to overcome it. And how could you fail to be pleased with such flattering perseverance? Nor is the difference in your opinions so very great. Alford is now so addicted to raillery, as rarely to utter his real sentiments, and prefers a *bon mot* to an argument. His father’s vacillating and interested conduct makes him shun politics at present; but I yet hope to see him an honour to his high station, and he often talks of taking you for his model in times to come.”

“Then I am to understand our friendship is the most natural thing in nature. That it was born of a noble principle, nourished by virtue, honour, and patriotism, and has met with no blight or stinting in its growth, from weakness, or vanity, or folly; in a word, that our friendship will consign that of Damon and Pythias to the waters of oblivion. Is it so?”

“Is there no temperate zone, Mr. Dormer? Must we dwell at the tropic or the poles? Have I not said that my youthful dream of man’s perfection has been broken, and almost banished?”

“Then you hold that our friendship is tainted by weakness, or folly, or vanity. I thought as much, when you spoke of De Rocca and De Stael. He was a fool to strive for the love of one made up of vanity, who would not yield for him the glitter of a name: and she but proved her selfishness in yielding to the flattery of his devotion.”

“Hush! hush! I love De Rocca were it only for his work on Spain, and we must not be too severe on De Stael for the vanity excited by talents so unusual in woman. The unknown may be worthless, yet unblamed; the celebrated stand on the pedestal of renown, exposed to the criticism of the reptile and the vulgar, and slandered by the stupid and malevolent. All see their faults, but only the good and the noble regret them. With national prejudice, I think, had she been an Englishwoman, educated to fulfil her duties at home rather than to shine abroad, that we might have loved and esteemed the woman as highly as we admire the genius.”

“Genius, remember, which she pined to exchange for beauty.”

“I cannot forget it, if I would; for it made too deep and too painful an impression. I had sighed for genius: that trait, as it showed me the weakness of her character, had no mean

share in awakening me from my dream of perfection ; yet she but did what others have done, and will do again.

‘The wished-for something, unpossessed,  
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.’

This is wrong ; but where is the person who wishes not ? Thus, while we blame her for being anxious to exchange a noble gift for one so far inferior, let us consider how few are wiser. The merchant suffers care and vexation, toiling for riches whilst content and competence are within his reach ; the conqueror treads in blood to govern others, and leaves himself ungoverned ; and the statesman too often seeks for power and popular applause, in preference to the approval of his own conscience.”

“One example more, lady. The beauty still coquets for the admiration of the many, though possessed of the love of one.”

Had these words been uttered in her own spirit of playful retort, she would not have quarrelled with them ; but they were not ; and her answer slightly marked her displeasure at his piqued and lordly tone.

“I shall not be such a bigot as to deny that such may sometimes be the case : but I do believe, that if there be such a thing as a pure disinterested feeling, it is for woman to furnish the proof. If, blinded by beauty, you will fix

your affections on a butterfly, what wonder if you grieve for your choice?"

"Sceptic as you avow yourself then, as to the perfectibility of man, you still firmly believe in the perfectibility of woman."

"Not exactly—a hope perhaps, rather than a belief."

"A distinction without a difference."

"No, a *nuance*! as a Parisian friend of mine would say."

"You seem inclined to make the French authorities for every thing this evening, Miss St. Maur. How do you mean to defend the justness and courteousness of your opinion?"

"The days of Bradamante are passed; and ladies are no longer expected to couch a lance in defence of person or opinion."

"Then you yield your opinion?"

"What opinion?"

"That man is always interested; woman always disinterested."

"Oh the wickedness and prejudice of the malevolent! to accuse me of saying any thing so rude. I did but hint that some men might be interested; and hoped some women were disinterested, and that as much from habits and education, as from any thing individually. I am sure we are firmer, warmer friends than you are. You have a thousand objects to occupy your thoughts, we but a hundred. Your affec-

tions are dispersed, ours concentrated. Nor am I quite sure that the dream of my early days has entirely passed away. It was so very beautiful, and made the world so like a paradise."

"Indulge such fancies still, and believe me once more a Bayard."

"No ! no ! no !" was her reply to his earnest appeal, shaking her head with a motion half playful, half melancholy.

" 'The babe must cease to think that it can play  
With heaven's rain-bow, alchymists must doubt  
The gold their shining crucibles give out.' "

"I am too dull to follow your changes, lady," he replied haughtily ; "one moment dreams are held as flowers of paradise, and then the next are spoken lightly of. I am but dull of comprehension."

"So it should seem," she said rather coldly, hurt at his haughtiness, and it was some moments ere the gentleman resumed the conversation.

"Since I have acknowledged my stupidity, will not Miss St. Maur deign to explain her meaning more clearly, as a reward for my humility." There was a half suppressed irony in his tone that was not to be mistaken, and the lady answered accordingly.

"Your humility might plead strongly in favour of your request, did I not fear I should but make the darkness more obscure. You do not

understand me, and the chances are you never will." Here Dormer fancied he heard a sigh. "It is a matter of no consequence," and she turned to quit the room, but Dormer detained her.

"Your pardon! It is to me of the greatest consequence. Do but answer some simple questions."

Trembling, confused, she knew not why; Helen again turned to the window to conceal her emotion, and thus tacitly consented to his request. But it was now Dormer's turn to be confused. No sooner was he at liberty to ask an explanation, than he doubted if there were any thing to explain, and felt all the folly of taking so seriously what had been spoken so playfully. His resentment vanished, and he remained silently looking at his companion.

Now perfectly composed, and surprised at his silence, Helen turned to discover the cause, and after gazing at him for a moment, asked gaily:

"Why this silence? Are the questions too awful to be clothed in common words, or too trifling to be asked at all?"

"The latter, I believe," he replied, once more yielding to the influence of her gaiety. "A few minutes since, and I thought you guilty of

nothing short of treason, and now I can imagine you nothing less than innocence itself."

"Oh! I am not the first who has been wrongfully suspected; and I more than guess, were this matter deeply examined, it would be found that the treason of my words is of a much lighter dye than the treason of your thoughts."

He coloured slightly at the charge so archly conveyed, and she continued:

"To speak seriously, dreaming of the natural perfectibility of man, or woman either, is worse than folly, for the very idea is in guilty opposition to the Divine Revelation, and the experience of our own hearts. But, however we may acknowledge the general truth of man's depravity, there are few things which cause so much pain to the young warm heart, as the having that truth forced upon it by instances of individual guilt. It is then that the heart turns with disgust from its fellows, and shrinks sickened and sorrowful into itself. It is then that, loathing the world, we should sink into despair, did not the light of religion shed its soft splendour around our path, and give us glimpses of a heaven a thousand times more pure, more bright, than the paradise of young Imagination. You look amazed, but I am no misanthrope. An heiress at twenty could scarcely become any thing so unsocial; nor do



I suspect all whom I meet. Though all have faults, most have virtues, and if we felt as deeply as we ought the magnitude of our own offences towards a Merciful Creator, we should judge more charitably of all offences committed towards ourselves." She paused for a moment, and then continued more gaily. "It may be that we enthusiasts have no right to complain at being called on to pay the penalty for our folly; but, the truth is, I have suffered much at having been obliged to displace from my list of favourites some of the idols of my imagination. I say now I know better, and that a burnt child dreads the fire; but I am forced to suspect occasionally that, substituting enthusiasm for ambition, La Bruyère's maxim is not far from the truth—*Le cas n'arrive guère ; ou l'on puisse dire j'étois enthousiaste ; ou on ne l'est point, ou on l'est toujours*. I believe it forms such an important part of my character, that fancy and reality will wage war, till a powerful ally of the latter shall step in to decide the combat. No wonder, therefore, if I sometimes believe, in despite of the reasonables, that St. George and the Dragon really fought *à l'outrance* on the mound below Offington Castle."

"Do not regret such a beautiful combination of mind, heart, and imagination," said Dormer,

looking his admiration of the lovely enthusiast. "Long may the combat between fancy and reality continue.

‘ One shade the more, one shade the less,  
Would mar that grace and loveliness.’ ”

“ Shame ! shame ! shame ! ” turning away her glowing cheek. “ Your counsel is more flattering than judicious. We are accountable beings, and fancy is but an unskilful guide. I shall suspect Mrs. Jones was correct to day, for yours is the advice of the Evil One : divide, and govern.”

“ Believe it not ! I would but have you as you are ; your own heart would ever guide you safely.”

“ Not if I am to yield credence to flattery, for vanity is an unwise counsellor ; and could I acquire a cooler mood of mind, it might be for my own happiness, here and hereafter.”

“ A cooler mood of mind ! Is it possible you can desire to change the bright glow of enthusiasm for the cold dulness of apathy ? Can a mind like yours admire the still and stagnant pool ? ”

“ It has, at least, nothing to fear from storms.”

“ Nothing to fear from storms ! And could you, would you be content with a bare immunity from danger ; and, lest a storm should ruffle your serenity, forego the lightning flash of feeling, the brilliant visions of genius.”

“We are not all geniuses.”

“True ! but the power of fully appreciating genius, is scarcely less rare and splendid than genius itself.”

“Do not its very rarity and splendour render it unfit for every day use ? I doubt if exclusiveness is calculated to increase happiness.”

“Then you have no higher ambition than to be one of the common herd, on a par with the Joneses, and the Jenkinses, and the Smithsons of every day life, who boast no minds above a saucepan. To pass your time in writing receipts, pickling, and preserving ; spoiling your children ; scolding your servants ; and talking over your neighbours, the last new novel, and the last new fashion in a breath ; or, to express all I mean, in the quaint terms of Shakspeare, whom it is always allowable to quote, devote your thoughts, your talents, and your love,

‘To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer.’ ”

“Oh, horrible ! horrible ! Mr. Dormer. How can you terrify me with such a frightful picture ?” and she laughed, and held up her hands in horror.

“I only paint the being you wish to resemble.”

“But I do not allow the correctness of your pencil : yours is a caricature, and not a likeness. Since you have quoted one poet, let me quote another——

‘ Nor peace nor ease the mind can know,  
Which like the needle true,  
Turns at the touch of joy or woe,  
But turning trembles too.’ ”

“ And you are positively sincere in desiring this dull ease.”

“ Peaceful calm ! if you please.”

“ Word it as you choose. Let it be luxurious serenity, or blissful inanity ; or any thing else you may prefer. What ’s in a name ? But can you repeat that prayer for indifference in sincerity ? ”

“ I cannot tell. I only feel there is much of truth in it.

‘ For as distress the soul can wound,  
’Tis pain in each degree ;  
’Tis bliss but to a certain bound,  
Beyond ’tis agony.’ ”

Either the truth of her words, or the earnestness with which they were spoken, struck him ; and he paused for a moment, and then resumed : “ You would really enrol yourself as a disciple of quietism ? ”

“ I sometimes think so ; but, like the children of a lesser growth, I am not quite sure I know what I wish.”

“ Like those said children, I suspect you do not know what is best for you. Appoint me your guardian, till you shall have come to years of discretion.”

She shook her head.

"You persist then? Will you give up all those sudden and brilliant perceptions of beauty, moral and intellectual; when mind feels it has met its kindred mind, and soars for a time above the dull realities of life; the participation in those lightning flashes of genius, that for brief space illumine the darkest spots; and those moments of rich and unutterable splendour, the few only can experience; the dazzling ocean of thought, with its vast immensity; and the deep intensity of feeling, for which mortal lips have no fitting words? Will you yield all these?" and he looked earnestly into her lovely face.

"These things are too beautiful to resign," she said, drawing her breath, which had been suspended during his passionate appeal; and for some moments both were lost in the communion of deep feeling. A superb flash of lightning throwing its rich flood of radiance full upon them, and an almost contemporaneous burst of thunder, startled them. Both felt the awful beauty of sight and sound, but Dormer only spoke.

"The very elements proclaim their approval of your decision."

"Are you quite sure they do not intend a warning?"

"Weak minds only yield to omens and

warnings; the strong mind is above their superstition. No! this is as it should be! Rather would I dwell amid tempests and storms, the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the volcano, dying or conquering, than drone away my days in stagnant monotony, a nameless and unhonoured thing."

Helen started—had Catherine spoken truth?—but he saw not the start, and continued:

"Let the vile suffer, but the noble dare. The victor's crown or the martyr's chaplet for me, rather than a life of dull ease, and an unhonoured grave."

He would have taken Helen's hand, but she withdrew it, and looked at him mournfully. We have owned she was an enthusiast, though all were not aware of the fact; but thanks to the strong religious feelings, planted and fostered by her parents, and which guided her actions, however she might on very rare occasions have appeared ridiculous in the eyes of the worldly, the cautious, and the cold, her enthusiasm had never yet led her into error. The time of trial was coming. Enthusiast as she was, there was something so violent and uncalled for in his words and tone, and such a flashing of his dark eye, that she trembled and feared more than she admired; and her acute penetration whispered a tale she had but little inclination to believe. The rich glow that had brightened her

cheek vanished, and left it as white as the dress she wore. He perceived the change, and enquired the cause in a softer tone.

"I scarcely know, but I fear I must make a wiser decision. Your words are alarming!"

"Would you retract already?" he asked, almost fiercely. "Remember! it is said, in answer to your prayer:

'No grain of cold indifference,  
Was ever yet allied to sense.'"

"Perhaps not," she said, trying to rally; "but if I admire less, I shall suffer less; and all be spared the pang a sunbeam can give, the wound a sound can inflict."

"You cast away then, as things unworthy to be prized, the brightest gifts of heaven?"

"Not so! I spoke in sport before. I would but be upon my guard lest I should pervert them. It is a rash and fearful thing to sigh for storms, to prove our powers of controlling them: a mightier arm than man's must guide the whirlwind—bid the earthquake stay."

He looked upon her almost with scorn, as he said angrily: "This is as it should be; a proof of your desire to be ever the same. Where are the lofty aspirings of the past moment? the noble thoughts? the sublime imaginings? Are they all gone?"

Her eyes sunk beneath the almost fierceness

of his gaze ; and she answered in a low sweet voice : “ I would but moderate, not banish all these things.”

“ Moderate ! Ay, all things should be in moderation ! I honour your propriety ! Hold this control, till you have learnt to prize alike the lofty aspirations of the noble and the talented, and the ingenious trimming to a dress.”

In spite of his violence, Helen could not forbear smiling at the last remark ; and she said in sport, thinking to divert the storm : “ I will take your advice, and try how moderate I can become.”

Too angry to believe her other than in earnest, his words again broke forth with more than their former vehemence.

“ Success attend your endeavours ! May victory crown your efforts ! Pride yourself on your right judgment ; sneer at all who are less cold-blooded than yourself ; ban genius and high imaginings ; despise all but the useful ; and wage a Bonapartean warfare against ideology. Do all this, and then—but pshaw !” stopping abruptly in the heat and full of his vehemence, “ I forgot to whom I was speaking ;” and bowing scornfully, he added, “ I beg your pardon, lady.”

Whatever were Helen’s thoughts at what had passed, it was evident, from her strong



effort at self control, she had no inclination they should be even divined; it would be ungenerous therefore to reveal them. After a silence of some minutes, she said abruptly, turning towards him as she spoke: "Mr. Dormer, you are an infidel!"

He looked in amaze at the startling assertion.

"Nay, never deny it! You think women have no minds, and are incapable of participating in man's noble thoughts."

He was more amazed than before. How had she divined that such, at that very moment, were his thoughts? Should he justify his infidelity? Deny it he could not with truth; and pride or a better feeling forbade a falsehood. The lady saw his perplexity; and her light laugh rang through the apartment. Such a laugh!

"There was nothing on earth so sweet,  
Save the music, the mirth, the soft touch of the hand,  
And the twinkling of fairies' feet."

"I will have no arguments: they convince none;" and she waved her hand as a playful order. "A Moore or a Hemans would fail to convert you."

Who could resist her? Gloom, scorn, anger, ill-humour, all fled before her witching gaiety; and he said earnestly:

"They might fail—but you shall win me from my heresy."

“Oh no ! you have none of the elements to become ‘*bon catholique*.’ I shall only inflict a penance : you shall give me the account of Italy you cheated me out of the other evening.”

He took a seat beside her ; and there, in the deep twilight, with the pale lightning ever and anon gleaming upon them, and revealing to each the almost dazzling animation of the one, and the rapt attention of the other, she drank in the tale of his thoughts and his feelings as he trod the land of the Roman, and sighed over its departed glory. To one less imbued with the spirit of beauty, and the enthusiasm of genius than was Helen, his words, glowing and fervent as they were, might have seemed dull “as a twice-told tale,” but to her they were as a spell, and an enchantment. Whilst giving utterance, now to the splendid inspirations, and anon to the pathetic wailings of his noble spirit, as the glories of the past, or the desolation of the present, rose or faded before his view, all other things were forgotten, and he seemed to soar above this earth. Even the beautiful being who sat beside him, looking up into his face, spell-bound by his eloquence, was scarcely thought of. She, who had shrunk from even a transient glance of those speaking eyes, now met their full gaze calmly and fearlessly ; for even the depth of her rich loveliness was at that moment passed unheeded by.

One, light and vain, might have felt piqued at this utter forgetfulness of her beauty, but to Helen this very forgetfulness was a deeper and more dangerous flattery. It told that, for the time at least, he had renounced his heresy, and hurried away by her attention and his own eloquence, felt, rather than acknowledged, the sympathy of thought between them. Feeling the power of the spell that bound her, was it wise after those fearful glimpses of his character and temper, to yield herself to its influence? still to sit beside him? still to listen to his glowing words? till all the realities around her faded from her view, and she only saw as he saw, and felt as he felt. Was this wise?—was this prudent? “*Je hais les gens qui ont toujours raison,*” as Madame de Sevigné says. I beg pardon of the moralists, but hope to redeem my character hereafter. How could we write romances if all were to act as they should? and, still worse, who would read them? Besides she was but twenty, and there are not many Percy Dormers in the world.

Candles were brought; the light glared on their eyes unpleasantly for a moment; then those eyes became accustomed to the difference, and the circumstance was forgotten. The tea equipage made its appearance; the rest of the party assembled; yet still were ancient Rome

and modern Italy pictured in their contrasts ; and still was Helen's attention earnest and undivided.

“Tourment, *mon cher, l'apportez,*” said lady Catherine, despatching her favourite after a ball of lambswool which had rolled, not accidentally as Alford thought, towards the unobservant pair. Tourment not only obeyed, but like some overzealous diplomatists, exceeded the limits of his order ; for having been at enmity with Mr. Dormer ever since his arrival, he availed himself of this opportunity to seize on that gentleman's heel, whilst apparently engaged in hunting for the ball. Mr. Dormer started from his seat to punish the culprit, no new offender, but Tourment was too quick for him, and almost before he had risen, the pampered favourite was snarling defiance from the lap of his mistress.

A muttered curse escaped his lips ; rage flashed from his dark eyes ; and striding to the sofa, he fronted Lady Catherine, and half extended an arm to snatch the criminal even from its sanctuary. The petted insolent ceased its snarling, and crouched and quailed beneath that fiery look ; a fair and rounded arm was thrown rather hastily round him, and the lady tried to meet that dark and angry gaze with one of equal fire : but it might not be, and for a moment

she bent over the dog to hide her discomfiture ; then rallying she turned towards Helen, with as unconcerned a manner as she could assume (and Lady Catherine Alford might have been a pupil of Talleyrand himself) and in a tone of pretended rapture exclaimed :

“ What a model for a Jupiter Tonans Mr. Dormer would make at this moment ! Oh, that Canova were but here ! ”

She ventured to look up as she finished speaking, but the expression of that stern face made even her tremble, and she instinctively held the dog more firmly. A muttered half-suppressed sound, of which none could catch the meaning, was heard, and then the gentleman stalked from the apartment. Not a look, not a movement had been lost upon Helen. She lingered in the obscurity of the window for some minutes, and then, with a deep sigh, took her station at the tea-table.

“ Do not look so distressed at the disturbance of your *tête-à-tête*, my dear,” said Catherine, out of humour with herself and every one else, and unable to triumph even in the success of her stratagem. “ To console you, here is a French proverb which will suit your powers of acting to the shadow of a shade. It will require no further practice, and you and Mr.

Dormer shall perform it to-morrow for our edification, *selon la nature*; or *con amore*, as my brother's tutor taught me. To-night was but the rehearsal, I conclude," and, as she spoke, she handed a slip of paper to Helen, on which was written, "*Chateau qui parle, et femme qui écoute, tous deux vont se rendre.*"

"Agreed," said Alford, who had read it over her shoulder, before Helen could reply, "Provided you afterwards enact: "*Les chiens aboient à la lune, mais la lune n'en brille pas moins.*"

Catherine looked a little abashed, but Helen, forgetting the provocation she had received, answered kindly:

"They are both clever proverbs, but having no meaning applicable to ourselves, we could neither of us I am sure enact them *con amore.*"

Catherine was touched by her forbearance, and whispered, "You are too good. I do not deserve this."

"Then grant me a boon?" said her friend, playfully.

"Name it."

"Let me take Tourment to your dressing-room."

The dog was surrendered, and she had scarcely returned from her mission ere Mr.

Dormer re-entered the apartment. Lord Marston soon deserted an absorbing pamphlet for a game of chess with Helen, which Alford looked over; Lady Marston had retired before; and Lady Catherine and Mr. Dormer both held books in their hands.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Dire d'un homme colére, inégal, querelleux, chagrin, poutilleux, capricieux, c'est son humeur, n'est pas l'excuser, comme on le croit; mais avouer sans y penser, que de si grands défauts sont irrémédiables.

CARACTERES DE LA BRUYERE.

NOTHING was heard at the breakfast-table, the next morning, but canvass and hustings; High Sheriff and Under Sheriff; Whig, Tory, and Radical; blue, orange, and purple; Catholic Emancipation and Reform in Parliament; Currency, Corn Laws, and Commerce. Helen only received a muttered salutation from the usually over punctilious Earl, as he stayed for an instant a prosing discussion on the party politics of the County, and considered herself highly favoured in receiving a half absent, half polite bow, from the more noble and ambitious Dormer. Alford, the mischief-loving Alford, was dividing his time between the discussion of coffee, ham, rolls, and eggs, with a garniture of Scotch marmalade; mystifying his father and friend with county divisions and coalitions, as



edifying as true ; sparring with his sister, and complimenting Helen.

Breakfast being hurried over, the gentlemen mounted their horses to canvass for their favourite candidate, Lord Marston having insisted on his son's accompanying them, much against his inclination.

" See the penalty of wisdom," said Alford, making a doleful face as he prepared to follow his friend. " They are aware I am the only sane one of the party, and therefore insist on my presence. Woe is me ! I think I shall play fool for the future to avoid such inflictions."

" Rather attempt a more novel part," said his sister ironically ; " the motley has brought you but little profit hitherto."

" I leave my character in your hands, Helen," he replied good humouredly, too much accustomed to Catherine's caustic speeches to heed them. " I know you will extend your protection over the innocent."

" Nay !" said she, laughing, " you are well qualified to defend yourself ; Wisdom can need no protector."

" Ay ! but her ægis is a Gorgon's head, and methinks I would rather play the fool, and win defence from a fairer face."

" But fair faces may deceive as well as fair

words, and I shall be obliged to play Gorgon to look flatterers into silence ;” and then she added, more earnestly, “ Lay aside your intention of playing the fool, and enact the wise man for this day at least.”

“ As I have done this morning ?” he inquired archly.

“ Oh no ! How can you, to say the thing prettily, allow your imagination such play ?”

“ That is, in plain English, how can I tell such lies ?” Then, indulging in a loud laugh, he continued—“ The look of consternation, when I talked of the coalition between Blue and Orange ! Own it was inimitable, Helen !”

“ It was your father !” said Helen, gravely.

He felt the rebuke, and pressing her hand, said, “ You are a dear good thing, and blame so sweetly that I must try to mend ;” then, relapsing into something of his former humour, he added, “ Yet must I not seem too wise, or the most honourable the Earl of Marston will set me up for the county.”

“ No fear of your over-wisdom, or its consequences,” interrupted his sister ; “ even parental blindness only thinks you fit to represent an impure borough.”

“ Thanks for your good word ! I may always reckon on that. ‘ Now fare ye well my ladies gay !’ and pray Helen, have an epitaph ready on

my return, for a whole day of wisdom and canvassing would prove fatal to the 'Undying One' himself."

"What a fuss about representing the great unpaid, and the little paid; the dabblers in politics, pensions, and perfumery; and the dabblers in diplomacy, dirt, and dependance. Now shall I have to bow and smile to every ragamuffin, that shall please to touch his hat for the next month, to keep up my prudent papa's county influence; nay, I should not wonder if I were expected to undergo a round of sillabubs at some of the topping farmers, as they are called; and to talk of the poultry and dairy, cocks, hens, and goslings, cream curd, and cheese, with their wives and daughters. I wish our late much beloved, highly respected, and ever-to-be-lamented county member, Mr. Penton, of Penton Place, as the Chronicle hath it, had been kind enough, instead of dying three days since, to defer his death till I had been in town, some hundred miles from this greasy multitude. Pity me, Helen!" said Catherine.

"Rather pity Mr. Penton's wife and children, who have sustained an almost irreparable loss."

"It is of no use to lecture me, Helen; and with all your striving to look grave, you cannot forbear a smile at my undergoing the sillabubs."

“Such an idea would excuse Diogenes himself; and I fear I am always ready for a laugh.”

“Why, you are a good-natured monitress I must allow; or I should quite detest you for a puritan. And now, to amuse ourselves without the gentlemen.”

The canvassing party returned late, looked vexed, harassed, and weary. Dinner being an hour beyond the usual time, was almost enough to account for the discomfiture of the ultra precise Lord Marston; but, as she passed Alford in going in to dinner, Helen heard him say to his sister,—“If you can resist being severe and provoking, for once do play *l'amiable*; for Dormer is like ‘a lum in a lowe,’ as an old Scotch freeholder told him, and my father’s humour is more likely to increase than quench the conflagration; so, for all our sakes, be agreeable.”

Helen looked at Dormer, and saw, with pain, marks of ill-suppressed passion and chafed pride, so plainly visible as to induce Catherine to attend to her brother’s request. Fortunately the dinner had suffered little from the delay, and the endeavours of Helen, Catherine, and Alford, not only prevented an explosion of wrath, but even appeared to have quieted, in some degree, the displeasure of the Earl and

his guest, when a sudden piece of intelligence destroyed all the good their united efforts had effected.

The Earl had given orders to be made acquainted with any thing that might be heard concerning the election; and, in obedience to this mandate, the butler informed his Lordship that hand-bills were issuing by Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, announcing his having consented, in compliance with the wishes of a numerous band of friends, to take upon himself the arduous but honourable duty of representing the county of ——; and soliciting the votes of the honest, incorruptible, and highly intelligent freeholders of the said county. \*

Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, a representative for the county of ——! A Manchester manufacturer, who had been in the county but two years; had built an enormous house, like the manufactory in which he had made his fortune. One who, at least, so said the Earl, ever took delight in crossing and thwarting the aristocracy of the country, and out-doing in splendid, if not tasteful magnificence, the most noble and eminent families! Was this to be? Forbid it all the blood of all the Marstons! At first the Earl seemed stunned by the immensity of the presumption; then, urged to exertion by the fearfulness of the peril, he rose from his

seat, and, whilst the elevation of outraged nobility almost gave dignity to his usually common-place appearance, he poured forth a rather violent and lengthy address to the nobility, gentry, and freeholders of the county of —, on the degradation of allowing themselves to be represented by Mr. Smug, of Smug Park ; a Manchester manufacturer ! a printer of cottons ! a weaver of calicoes ! a thing of muslins and long cloths, power-looms and cotton velvets ! a *parvenu* ! a *nouveau riche* ! a man without a father, since he boasted of being the founder of his family. “ Shall such a blot on the honour of our county be endured ? ” said his Lordship, in conclusion. “ Such a stain on its fame ! Will the Howards, and the De Veres, and the St. Maurs, and the Throgmortons, and the other noble families of the country, who can trace up from father to son, from generation to generation, vail before a low-born artizan, a radical upstart, who talks of decreased taxation and amended corn laws ? Never ! never ! rather let us contest the point to the last drop of our blood. Let the noble and the high-born, and the clear-judging, unite with heart and hand in the common and patriotic purpose of saving the county from such foul disgrace. Yes ; let us show to the world the falshood of his asser-

tion, that he yields to the wishes of a band of friends. The eyes of all England are upon us, and our country expects that every man will do his duty."

With this sublime climax his Lordship concluded ; and having forgotten, in the ardour of his harangue, that he had not been addressing a county meeting, looked round for applause. Surprise, which it pleased him to interpret into admiration, was strongly depicted on every countenance. Never had the Earl displayed so much eloquence and force of language ; for never before, after a speech of five minutes, had even his most ingenious listeners been able to decide on what were his real wishes. But then, how could he fail to be eloquent on such a subject ? The only pity was, that the speech had not been made at the County Hall, addressed to a County meeting, and reported in a County paper. All were silent, and the speaker sat down with a self-satisfied air, remembering to have read somewhere, that silence is the most flattering applause from thinking minds.

" Weave the warp, and weave the woof,  
The winding-sheet of Smug's vile race ;  
Give ample room and verge enough  
The manufacturer's fate to trace ! "

exclaimed Lord Alford, with a theatrical tone and air.

“Will you never be serious on serious things,” said his father angrily, who just imagined it possible some ridicule might be couched in the lines, notwithstanding their pompous delivery; then turning to his guest, he said, “What plan do you recommend, Mr. Dormer, to crush this audacious upstart.”

“The leaving him to his contemptibility. Our notice would do him too much honour;” replied that lordly gentleman, with a look that would have annihilated twenty manufacturers of uninsured lives.

“Yes! perhaps so — but I should have thought—that is I should have imagined—yet I cannot say—doubtless you know best,”—replied his questioner, freed in some degree from his former excitement, and sinking back into his usual doubtful and prosing strain.

“I tremble for the fate of the future Mrs. Dormer; even I should perish beneath such a look,” remarked Catherine in an under-tone, fixing Helen’s attention on *le fier*.

“The future Mrs. Dormer must abide her fate, if she choose to provoke it,” replied our heroine pointedly.

“Tourment, my darling, don’t lap all the cream; and without strawberries too!” said his mistress, turning abruptly to her favourite, who had taken advantage of her inattention to help himself to some of the dessert dainties.



“Order some more cream, Alford; and do, Catherine, teach your dog to be less troublesome;” remarked Lady Marston, gently sighing as she thought how little her admonitions were heeded.

“*Pauvre Tourment*,” said her daughter, carelessly, as though she had not heard her mother’s reproof. “Politics are dry things, to be sure, so no wonder you are thirsty.”

“They are things of which women can know nothing,” remarked her father, in what he meant for a tone of dignified reproof.

“Never, papa?” assuming a look of simplicity. “I thought I had heard of some old women having places in the Cabinet?”

Lord Marston was horrified at such a scandal, and hastened to reprove his daughter for listening to such false and idle tales. It pleased Catherine to put on a humble and submissive look; and the Earl, after a moment’s pause, turned to Helen.

“For my part I hate idle tales.” This was not true, for like all weak-minded people, he had a taste for gossiping; and a hint of a frown on a favourite, or a smile on a *chassé*, or a delicate morceau of court scandal, was as oil to the lamp of his mind; but then such things were to be contradicted in all grades below his own, and only hinted in mysterious whispers

even among the privileged class. To return to his Lordship's speech, lest the digression should be thought as prosy as his harangue.

"I think all high-minded people should decidedly contradict them."

This was a favourite phrase with the Earl, who, as plain people desire to be thought handsome, and silly ones clever, had the ambition to be considered high-minded and decided. Another digression! Once more I sue for pardon! It shall be:

"A brotherless hermit, the last of his race."

"Holding such things in abhorrence as I do, I could not but be very much distressed—indeed greatly shocked—at finding that some one had presumed, falsely I am sure; but still had presumed to hint at your name in connection with a most extraordinary—indeed, I may say a most audacious report. I concluded instantly, nay I felt convinced that there could be no truth in the story; and I determined instantly, as all high-minded people should do, to contradict it decidedly; and accordingly I said, I felt assured, nay I was almost convinced, that if not absolutely false, there must be some misapprehension in the matter; and that I should take the liberty, or rather do you the kindness to speak to you on the subject."

Here he paused, as expecting a reply, and Helen, who, though aware of his talent for making great things out of small, was really rather startled at this fearful exordium, felt herself obliged to thank him for his high-minded decision in contradicting the report, and request to know its purport.

“ I am much distressed to be the bearer of such a tale ; but I think, and I imagine, you will agree with me that it will be less painful to you to hear it from my lips, than from those of others ; and I have only to add, I shall be happy to assist with my counsel how best to silence the report.”

His lordship paused again, but Helen, too anxious to learn the extent of her peril to delay him by questions, only bowed, and he proceeded.

“ To one less gifted than yourself, I should have thought some preparation necessary ; but high-minded and decided as I know you to be, I deemed it needless to waste time in breaking the matter to you cautiously, but have hastened to lay the report before you at once, without preparation or circumlocution ; premising that, though I heard it from the person himself, I did not give it the slightest credit ; that is, I doubted it, as all high-minded people would do, until I heard it from yourself. It is, I am

informed, most scandalously asserted, though of course without truth, that you are going to place Robert Neale, that great poacher and insolent vagabond, in a cottage on your estate."

As his lordship stated the report with all due emphasis, he looked at Helen to see if she felt as much horror as himself. It was with some difficulty that she could prevent herself from laughing, so little had his pompous manner and sublime introduction prepared her for such an insignificant catastrophe; but it was a rare thing indeed for Helen St. Maur to forget what was due to the feelings of others, so resisting the temptation, and shunning Alford's mischievous look, she bent to pick up her glove, thus veiling the smile at her own fears, and then answered with her usual sweetness and tolerable gravity :

"I fear, indeed, as your lordship justly observes, that there has been much misapprehension on the subject. I certainly have promised to allow Robert Neale to occupy one of my cottages for the next year, at least; but I did not give that promise till after many enquiries, which left me convinced he was innocent of the charges made against him. I will be surety for his good behaviour for the next twelve months; so that I trust that you need entertain no fear for your hares and pheasants."

“Miss St. Maur,” said the Earl pompously, as though his words must annihilate every doubt, “Robert Neale was convicted of poaching by the Bench of Magistrates, and sentenced by them to imprisonment.”

“Yes ! but then no mortal judge is infallible ; and circumstances have come out since, which make me believe him innocent of the charge, and that his accuser was actuated by evil motives to speak falsely. It was his doing a service to that very accuser, and my considering him as an unfortunate man, that induced me to allow him a shelter on my estate. I cannot blame him for not selling his little freehold ; one of the charges brought against him. You know,” she added playfully, “we women are not expected to exhibit all that wisdom and consistency that is looked for from statesmen and legislators ; we have a patent for being capricious and fanciful. Allow this, if you please, to pass as a fancy on my part ; for I fear there is no hope of clearing my protégé’s fame at present. At any rate, he suffered for his crime, real or supposed ; and none should be punished twice.”

Here, in obedience to a look from the lady of the house, she rose to adjourn to the drawing-room, but the Earl requesting a few minutes audience, she found herself obliged to remain

whilst he favoured her with one of his long and prosy harangues, of which she understood little, save that magistrates could not err, and that poachers should be considered as under a ban, more cruel than the excommunications of the superstitious ages. The previous part of the ill-understood dissertation was forgotten in its concluding sentence, delivered in an angry and triumphant tone. "He is a poacher, a vagabond, and an ungrateful rascal, for he has declared he will vote against your desire at the election."

"How can your lordship, or Robert Neale, know what is my desire?" inquired Helen, displeased at finding her name had been used.

The Earl looked amazed at the question. "Of course we all know your wishes. We consider you as one of us from your ancient family, though without a title," this was said with a patronizing air, "and we are all for Mordaunt. But you will have no trouble about the matter; I and Euston will manage every thing for you. Only order your steward to send that Neale a notice not to come on your grounds; tell him you do this because he votes against your wishes, and none of your other tenants will prove refractory, I dare say. Indeed, sure of your approval, we told the pestilent fellow, that if you had really promised him

the cottage before, he must now look out for one somewhere else."

"And what said he?"

"He had the insolence to doubt our words, and to say he would only believe it from your own lips; and that, let what would come of it, he should vote as he liked. It is most fortunate, my dear young lady, he has shown himself so soon, or he might have caused you much trouble. Ladies are easily imposed on; but send the warnings and all will be well."

"Pardon me, my lord," replied Helen indignantly; "I cannot break my word, pledged for former merit; and I am very sorry my name should have been coupled with the election."

"Do I understand you?" exclaimed the Earl, in a tone of most unaristocratic wonder. "You will have all your other tenants in rebellion, if you do not make an example of this man."

"If you mean by rebellion, each giving his vote as his own conscience may dictate, I feel no dread from such conduct."

Lord Marston's amazement deprived him of the power of speech; but Mr. Dormer's anger had no such silencing effect upon him, and he spoke in a tone of haughty courtesy, and ill-repressed violence, that showed he had by no means recovered the control of his temper.

"If you will consider for one moment, Miss

St. Maur, I am sure you will see the necessity of checking the insolence of the mob; or the ensuing Parliaments will be composed of half-educated demagogues, and uneducated radicals. His lordship's plan is the only one you can pursue. You, as a lady, can know nothing of these matters; we will manage every thing; and you be spared all trouble, but receiving Mr. Mordaunt's thanks. The rebellious spirit of the times must be checked, or the noble of the land will be expected to bow and cringe before the rabble; and tenants must be taught to respect the wishes of their landlords. The sheltering of Neale would be a personal insult to Lord Marston and myself, and might be dangerous to you; as some minds are too turbulent to be softened even by the thought of woman's weakness. You really must send the notice."

There was a something so overbearing and ungenerous in this speech, and it was delivered in such a haughty tone, that Helen was shocked and indignant; and yet she sighed as, looking steadily at the speaker, she answered coldly:

"There are indeed some minds too turbulent to be softened even by woman's weakness; but I may not act unjustly from the fear of further insult:" then turning from Mr. Dormer, whose flashing eye and changing cheek showed how ill he brooked her words, she spoke decidedly, but courteously to the Earl.



“I am no admirer of female politicians; home is a woman’s sphere, and she should soften not exasperate party spirit: thus, owning my inferiority, your lordship is at perfect liberty to consider my conduct as weakness or caprice; but holding large landed property, with neither father or brother, I am peculiarly situated; and can only act as I think my dear father would have acted had he been spared me, and the charge of injustice or harshness never tainted his name.”

“Your cousin will act for you.”

“Pardon me; I love my cousin, but I act for myself. As former legislators have decided that small freeholders have sufficient judgment to enable them to give a proper vote, I see no right I can have to tempt them by threat or promise to vote against their consciences. The same liberty of opinion we claim for ourselves, it is but just to grant to them. We cannot take away their responsibility to their God, how then may we presume to tempt them to evil? He acts ill who does evil that good may come of it; and the purity of his principles must be doubted, who would persuade us he seeks power but for his country’s good, and yet would win that power by guile or menace. My tenants shall be informed of my wishes; but, at the same time, of their own perfect freedom,

for not a dependent of mine shall suffer for opinion. I am grieved at what I have to say concerning Mr. Mordaunt, but it would be unfair to allow you to suppose I can wish him success. His private conduct is so notorious as to render it impossible to be concealed even from female ears, and consequently, to favour or to aid him in the slightest degree is entirely out of the question."

"Thanks for your lecture, and where may we look for Miss St. Maur's immaculate member?" inquired Mr. Dormer scornfully, for the Earl was too much astounded to speak.

"I may be something of a visionary," replied our heroine, with calm dignity, that contrasted strongly with his intemperate violence; "but I should blush for my native county, could it not furnish a more worthy representative."

"Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, for instance!"

"I cannot allow such a libel on the county of ———; though Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, as a specimen of honest industry, merits respect, not ridicule; and I am grieved to find that Mr. Dormer can allow politics to deaden nobler feelings. If you send one to Parliament who openly outrages his duty to his God, how can you expect he will do his duty to his country? Mr. Howard, or Sir William de Vere, would unite the suffrages of the good and the wise.

Neale must apologize for his conduct, and, though, having my promise for his former behaviour, I do not think myself justified in retracting it, he shall be made aware the past shall furnish no indemnity for the future."

"Not at my request I beg, Miss St. Maur;" said Mr. Dormer still more haughtily. "Believe me, I wish no apologies from insolent labourers."

"As you please," she replied coldly, as she left the room to prevent all further discussion.

Neither Lord Marston or Mr. Dormer appeared during the evening; the former sent an excuse by Alford, on the plea of being overpowered by business, whilst the latter disdained any excuse whatever.

"A Parisian *souvenir* for your thoughts, my pretty playfellow," said Alford to Helen, as she sat alone in the drawing-room, her thoughts employed on any subject rather than the book before her.

She started from her reverie, sighed, and then recovering herself, endeavoured to answer gaily:

"Agreed! I was thinking if there were no sun without a spot, no diamond without a flaw."

"Tut!" replied her companion, in a vexed tone; at no difficulty to guess her meaning. "What then, a sun is a sun despite its spots;

and a diamond a diamond, despite its flaw ; and both the monarchs of their kinds. You have been looking through Catherine's microscope, or telescope, whichever it may be ; remember the focus cannot be the same for all."

"You pay my penetration an ill compliment ; there are some spots and flaws so glaring that the uncouched might discover them. A flaw in a diamond destroys its value in the eyes of a judicious lapidary, and the spots in the sun—"

"As spots on ermine beautify the rest," interrupted Alford.

"Not so ! they deface its beauty, and weaken its power."

"Nonsense ! it is only a few over-wise people who have discovered the spots, and they have been there for years, and done no harm. Give me a contrast ; what you call harmony is like a calm at sea. The spots will never hurt. You need not see them."

"I fear I am one of the over-wise ! And who can say that those spots may not in time transform the sun into a fiery comet, with the will and the power to destroy."

"That is a new discovery in natural philosophy, on which I cannot pretend to decide," said he gaily, in answer to her laughing and laughable supposition. "But you need not fear ; the comet would never injure you."

“ Not if I keep out of the range of its fiery tail, which it is my intention to do ; as well as to receive your future reports with caution. You have either been unusually blind, or wilfully silent. I suspect the latter.”

“ You are unreasonable ! How can the noble and high-spirited lion be expected to show the apathetic forbearance of the turnspit ? ’Tis a noble animal after all.”

“ What does his shrieking victim say ? ”

“ *Oh ! c’est selon les règles ! c’est son humeur ?* ”

“ *Je préfère, sans hésiter, l’âne qui porte sa charge, au lion qui dévore les hommes.* Now, on your honour, as you would not injure the innocent, was Neale as insolent as was represented ? ”

He turned away from her penetrating look, and was silent.

“ I understand, and sympathise with your regret. Of course he will have my cottage.”

“ I know no reason why he should not.”

“ Thank you for this candour.”

All that evening did Alford strive to raise his friend in Helen’s estimation ; for he never for one moment doubted that, once united, her sweetness would soften his impetuosity.

She listened with evident pleasure to the

noble traits he related, and yet he doubted if her former opinion was changed.

Dormer, notwithstanding a hint from his friend, showed no wish that the past should be forgotten, but met Helen the next morning, and allowed her to depart with a haughty bow, and a cold good morning. Accustomed to command obedience, admiration, and love, he held it beneath him to sue for either. A little attention, and a few kind enquiries, made principally for the sake of Lady Marston, soon reinstated Helen in the opinion of the Earl. The news of the morning, that Mr. Mordaunt did not intend to stand, and that Mr. Howard was likely to be returned without opposition, tended not a little to promote his Lordship's good-humour. But the case was different with regard to Mr. Dormer; no such motive induced her to endeavour to conciliate him; and, feeling an apology was due to her for his violence, she merely treated him with cold politeness, and a scrupulous avoidance of all reference to the past.

As Helen proceeded homewards, the events of the last few days passed in review before her. It was less than one little week that she had spent at Marston, and what feelings and emotions, what harmonies and contradictions, what lights and shadows, what pains and pleasures,

had not been crowded into that short space of time. It had been a week of strong excitement, of splendid enchantment, awakening sympathies of which she had scarcely dreamt; giving life to feelings that perhaps it would have been better for her should never have existed. It was living years in a few fleeting hours; and feeling and knowing that those hours, swiftly as they passed, might change and characterize her whole life. Passion was striving to ruffle the holy calm of her bosom, as the storm disturbs the serenity of the placid ocean; and even whilst she felt, she almost wished she could shut her eyes against the danger.

She had heard Dormer's praises from his friend, till he had become unconsciously her *beau idéal*—the model, in her imagination, of all that man should be. Their two first interviews had something in them to interest a romantic mind; and her cousin's violence had but made her think the more of the stranger. But what then? Had Dormer been like other men, she would only have felt disappointment from Alford's extravagant praise and the waste of her own brilliant imaginings, whilst the hero of the church-yard and the village bridge would have only held the same estimation in her mind as others had done before.

But Percy Dormer was not like other men;

there was mind in every thing he said or did; he was a *Salvator Rosa*, "*tutto fresco, spirito, e bile.*" One of those rare beings one may chance to meet once in our lives; and of whom one may say, with the exactitude of common-place, that, "take him all in all, we shall ne'er look upon his like again." A fiery planet must have presided at his birth. His friends might have called him, "A comet in splendor and light;" his enemies would have added, "The herald of darkness and care."

It may be guessed how dangerous such a person was likely to become to the peace of mind of a being possessed of Helen's brilliant imagination, passionate admiration of genius, and strong affections, heralded as he had been by the lavish praises of his friend. His passionate enthusiasm, soaring to the sublime, contrasted with the paltry gossip and petty nothings of the common herd; his splendid talents and his daring ambition, which ever appeared to have something noble as its aim, were all calculated to win her, wearied as she was with the inane adulations of the sordid and the silly. The flattery of the lips she despised; by the flattery of the heart she had as yet been untouched; but no one was more open to the flattery of the mind.

Could he have played the hypocrite, had she



seen him only in his brilliant moods—the effect might have been too dazzling to have been withstood, and she might have left Marston without the wish or power of consideration; but she had seen him in his darker moods, when passion marred the splendour of his character, and the blame and the sorrow must rest on herself, if she should still allow that splendour to dazzle her.

The beautiful woods through which she passed were unheeded, for Helen's mind was dwelling on Mr. Dormer's "Graphic Sketches" of Rome and Italy, and, in the sympathy of their tastes on such subjects, she forgot his violence, and the coldness of their parting. As she passed through her own lodge-gate, Neale advanced to the carriage, and humbly begging her pardon for stopping her, told his version of the scene of the day before; his regret at being obliged to vote against her wishes, as Mr. Smug had formerly saved him from starving; and concluded by asking if he must look out for a cottage elsewhere. She soon set the matter to rights, and sent the man back to his work with a happy heart. To revert to her former brilliant visions was beyond her power. The man's tale had stripped Mr. Dormer's character of much of its fancied splendour; and shown, that with the virtues of the Romans, on whose noble

deeds he dwelt with so much enthusiasm, he mingled their pride and contempt for those beneath him, as well in mind as in station. The Romans had no better guide than the light of nature; and the glory of their virtues may almost blind us to their errors. Mr. Dormer lived under a holier law; and as that light was brighter, so were the sins committed under it the greater. His fate was set for good or ill; a splendid example or a fearful warning. With passions too strong for mere human control, and pride too overweening to man to be humble with his God, "he was a form of brass with feet of clay." Helen thought of all these things, and she breathed a passionate wish, that the last week, with all its hopes and fears, splendour and gloom, could be swept for ever from her memory. Then, after a while, she smiled at her own folly, and pursued a wiser course.

Mrs. Hargrave found her as cheerful and attentive as ever, and her Sunday scholars on the morrow proved her to be as patient and indefatigable as usual; but she herself was aware that she sought occupation as a duty rather than a pleasure; and that, despite that occupation, she could not always prevent herself from thinking how, where, and when would chance her next meeting with Mr. Dormer. Such speculations were doomed soon to end in cer-

tainty, for on the third day after her return, as she was walking home from the village, she was joined by Alford and his friend, who, giving their horses to the groom, announced their intention of being her escort. Their meeting had been so unexpected she had had no time to determine on her reception of Mr. Dormer; whilst his animated delight had been so apparent that she had allowed him unchecked, almost unconsciously, to take and press that hand which Alford had placed in his, saying, to him only would he resign it.

Mr. Dormer was in one of his most brilliant moods; his eye looked a softer flattery, his usually lordly tone had more of musical sweetness, his sentiments were grand and noble, and had he breathed but one word of sorrow for the past, all that had been might have been forgotten. Yet was not Helen quite blinded by the present to the warning of the past, the risk and danger of the future; if, seeing the peril, she chose to encounter it, the shame and punishment rest on her own head.

Alford came with a message from his father, to request she would ensure as goodly a cortége of respectable freeholders as possible to attend Mr. Howard on the day of nomination, and alarm Mr. Smug from the troubles of a con-

tested election. Compliance was readily promised; the more so, as her tenants on hearing her wishes had declared theirs to be the same; and added, that if not, rather than vote contrary to her wishes, they would not have voted at all, so fully did they appreciate her conduct. The Earl had heard this, and she had risen in his estimation accordingly. As the election was spoken of, Helen looked at Mr. Dormer, wishing him to understand she expected an apology. He turned away from her glance; and if he felt that an apology were due, he did not seem the more inclined to make it. She saw this disinclination; and felt the error had not been regretted, though he might wish her to forget it. A spirited conversation ensued, till they came to a narrow stream that welled from beneath a little brake, and ran deeply and darkly within its thickly wooded banks.

“Is this Lethe?” inquired Alford, as he handed Helen across the rustic bridge; “if so I must taste its waters to banish all recollection of this horrid election, for I am bored to death with it. Where shall I find a fairy’s acorn cup?”

“Will Miss St. Maur allow me to present her with a draught, that she also may forget all that was unpleasant concerning this election?” enquired Mr. Dormer, in a tone that should

have been more earnest and more humble to ensure success; but his pride forbade. He thought he had stooped more than sufficient, she thought he had scarcely stooped at all, and answered under this impression; besides, she could not forget that his conduct about Neale had shown more than a sudden burst of ill temper.

“It would be as unwise as impossible to pour the waters of oblivion over one subject alone; the Lethean draught must banish the remembrance of all or of none.”

“What mean you? Would you willingly erase from your memory every occurrence of the past week? A week that has been to me what no week was before or ever can be again?” and as he spoke he took her hand, and looked earnestly and enquiringly into her face.

Her eyes sank beneath his ardent gaze, and the colour deepened on her cheek; but she withdrew her hand, and answered steadily and calmly, “I cannot think my former saying unwise; all should be erased from the memory, or none.”

“Must pains and pleasures always be remembered together? Or would you give me to understand there was nothing pleasurable where-with to burden your memory?”

She could not but be touched by the increas-

ing earnestness of his manner, though more of pride mingled with it; and her tone had something melancholy in it as she answered, "Much, very much of pleasure, but it may be more of pain; and it is fitting both should be remembered to enable the mind to judge aright."

There could be no mistaking her meaning; and her very sorrow and candour, the opposite to anger, galled him more than any vehemence of offence could possibly have done, and all his pride and haughtiness blazed boldly forth.

"Be it as you wish, lady; I have no longer the desire, as I possess not the power, to alter your decision. Let the waters of Lethe, then, roll over the events of the past week, and our acquaintance date from now:" and he walked on, and joined Alford, who, seeing them engaged in earnest conversation, had kept aloof. His clouded brow told his friend, without words, that the conference had not ended as he wished; but too wise and too delicate to ask questions, he only exerted himself the more to relieve both, and turning to wait for Helen, addressed her gaily:

"Besides my father's message, I have to present a humble petition from Catherine, and, as she declares she will attribute a failure to a want of eloquence on our parts, we will neither

admit of excuse or refusal. There is to be a grand pic-nic on Thursday week in Feldon Park, and as my father insists on Catherine's going, she is as peremptory in ordering your attendance."

"A very humble petition truly! It may rather be designated an absolute command, only to be disobeyed at imminent peril; for Catherine is no merciful foe. But what could induce the Earl to insist on her going?"

"Because it is set on foot by Mesdames Carleton and Daniell, to please the daughter of the former; and as their husbands command some votes, and one of the ladies at least is supposed occasionally to command her lord, it is thought politic to condescend to the pic-nic. Catherine bade me say, she considered it the prologue to the syllabubs, and that go you must, to initiate her into the art of playing popular."

She smiled at the message; but not anxious to meet Mr. Dormer oftener than was necessary, after what had passed, declined, on the plea of knowing nothing of the Daniells, little of the Carletons, and a fear of catching cold.

"You will not deny your acquaintance with John Carleton, I presume?" said Alfred archly, who was determined to overrule every excuse. "Notwithstanding your cruel rejection, he still

proclaims your resemblance to his horse Conqueror, which won at Newmarket, and that he intends riding over to solicit your attendance at the rural refection, as Miss Jones terms it; so you may as well, ‘for auld lang syne,’ allow me the honour of having won your consent. Come, Dormer, unite your eloquence with mine, and we shall win the victory; engaging to be her *cavalieri serventi*, and to protect her from every danger.”

“Pardon me,” replied Dormer, haughtily, whilst his bent brows and flashing eyes gave full force to his scornful speech. “Miss St. Maur’s resolves are always so reasonable, it would be but a waste of words to strive to change them; nor have I the presumption to imagine my wishes would possess the slightest influence. I must also decline the honourable office of *cavalier servente*, as business will call me to town before the appointed day.”

Alford looked aghast at this unexpected and insulting violence; and Helen, hurt and wounded, answered warmly:

“Do not fear, Mr. Dormer, the being pressed into such an ungracious service, or allow the dread to prevent your attending the party; for should I claim my woman’s privilege of change, and go, no danger should induce me to trouble you for protection.”



He felt the just rebuke of her words and Alford's looks; but too proud and angry to make an apology, only repeated the necessity of going to town; a necessity, as both were aware, discovered within the last five minutes. His friend's gaiety again came to his relief.

"Here comes John Carleton on his horse Conqueror; so yield you at discretion, *ma belle!*"

"Only save me from 'my son John and his horse Conqueror,' and I will attend a pic-nic at the Antipodes," was Helen's laughing reply; Dormer's intended absence having taken away her objection, as well as her wish for the party.

She turned into another path as she spoke, unwilling that even the obtuse John Carleton should have a chance of perceiving Dormer's frown, or her own flushed cheek; and before they reached the house he had taken his departure. Dormer mounted his horse instantly, and refusing alike Helen's cold but polite invitation, and Alford's whispered intreaties to enter the mansion, rode off, vouchsafing to his fair hostess only the bow and good morning of an almost stranger.

"Helen! Helen!" said Alford, reproachfully, as he lingered à moment, "when will you learn to pity the pangs of *la belle passion?*"

“When will your friend learn to control his temper?”

“When blessed with your hand. Let me but hint a hope, and it will be done.”

“Never: it is too late!”

He was surprised at her sad and decided tone; he would have remonstrated, but she kissed her hand in adieu, and entered the house.

## CHAPTER IX.

She seemed a splendid angel, newly dress'd,  
Save wings, for heaven.

KEATS.

Oh, is thy soul like mountain tide,  
That swell'd by winter storm and shower,  
Rolls down in turbulence of power  
A torrent fierce and wide !

\* \* \* \* \*

Needs but a buffet, and no more :  
The groom lies senseless in his gore.

SCOTT.

ON a review of the past, Helen came to the conclusion that Mr. Dormer would make no further effort to see her, at least before the conclusion of this present visit ; and we are by no means prepared to assert that the conclusion gave her pleasure—so difficult is it for even strong minds to free themselves from the weakness of regretting the necessary consequences of their own acts ! She grieved that the necessity for caution existed ; and such is the weakness of our nature, she would probably have rejoiced had any motive, sufficiently powerful

to absolve her to her own conscience, induced her to act otherwise. But no such motive was likely to arise, and the warning of her parents to beware how she allowed genius or talents to dazzle her, was present to her mind. It would almost seem as if they had foreseen the future. Not that her affections were as yet beyond her own control, but the enchantment in his society, the void in his absence, the taunts of Catherine, and the arch looks of Alford, had all shown her that they might soon become so if she indulged in the dangerous excitement. This had induced her to speak more decidedly than she would otherwise have done; but now that she considered all friendly intercourse at an end between them, she sighed to think that it must be so; and she sighed still more deeply, to think how passion might mar and taint a noble mind.

Conclusions, though formed on reasonable grounds, are not always correct, and the next day, to Helen's great surprise, and at the first instant to her pleasure, she saw Mr. Dormer on his way to Hurlestone. She was walking in the grounds at some distance, but a glance was enough; she could not be mistaken. There was a slight struggle, a slight hesitation, and then she turned into a contrary path. He might apologize, though that was doubtful; but

how could she expect him to curb his impetuosity for her, when it had remained unchecked from higher motives, and when even she had been its object more than once. She felt no displeasure towards him, but she felt distrust of herself.

It was late ere she returned to the house; for his having traversed the woods in every direction had rendered it difficult to avoid a meeting. A note from Lady Marston, about some flowers, had been the avowed motive of his visit; but Helen suspected, and suspected truly, some other object was in the back ground.

Early on the day before the pic-nic, Helen went to the village to visit the widow Watts, who, from having been a servant of her mother's, was a great favourite. A little wicket opened into a gay but very small flower-garden, before the cottage; whilst jessamine, roses, sweet-briar, and honeysuckle, covered a rustic porch and the space between the windows. The inside of the cottage was as neat as the hands of the most tidy of housewives could make it, but the dame herself sat in her arm chair, sad and sorrowful, with her spectacles lying on a large Bible, which lay open before her, tear after tear chasing each other down her pale thin cheeks.

"Good morning, dame," said Helen, in a kind winning tone, for her light step, as she

passed through the open doorway, roused not the widow from her mournful thoughts.

"God bless you, Miss Helen! for all your kindness," said the old woman, rising and placing a chair for her visitor. "It almost makes me happy only to look upon your sweet smile."

"I am come to see if I cannot do more than smile upon you," replied our heroine, with her own sweet cheerfulness, which, bright as it was, never seemed a mockery even to the most miserable. "You were out when I called before, but you must tell me now why you weep, and how I can help you?"

"Oh, Miss Helen! Miss Helen! you have just got your blessed mother's own sweet look and voice, that makes one happy and yet cry too. Oh, if you would but speak to my poor James, perhaps he would mind you. It is breaking my heart, that it is, to see him sitting all day long without speaking a word, only sighing; and leaving all the garden to run to ruin; and only thinking of dying; and taking on so about poor Henry Feller."

"But you must tell me first how it all happened, for when I saw you last you were too ill to talk much."

"Yes, Miss Helen, I was very ill indeed then; but thanks to God, and the doctor, and the nice things you sent me, I am quite well

now, only a little weak, or so ; and if it would please God to make James smile again, I should be quite happy then. But I have been thinking, since this happened, that 'tis a sad thing for fathers and mothers not to bring their children up in the right way, and now I mind your good mother used to tell me, time after time : ' Ah, Mary Watts, says she, you punish the boy for doing wrong once in twenty times, and let him do wrong without saying any thing the other nineteen. If you never gave him any thing he cried for, but quietly made him do as you told him, you need never punish at all. Then you tell him, when he is in a passion, that the beggar-man, or the chimney-sweep will have him ; which he will soon learn to be a story, and then never believe you again ; whereas teach him, as soon as possible, his violence will offend a just though merciful God, and you will give him a good motive for a good deed ; and should he be tempted to go astray, he may return to the right path in after life.' I remember her words well ; but alack a day ! I never minded to do them ; and now I feel it all as she said. To be sure James is as good a lad as ever was in most things, and would not hurt a worm if he warn't in a passion, and then he is as furious as a mad bull. But I am tiring you, Miss Helen, and so I'll tell you all about

it at once. My James and Henry Feller was like brothers, even when they was boys, and was always together; and his mother was a widow too, and we had been in the same service once, and so we liked to let them be with one another, and we rather hoped Jane, that's Henry's sister, and my boy would take a liking to each other when they was old enough. They was always together, even when they grew up; and I never knew James in a passion with him, though Henry used to keep on joking and laughing at him by the hour at a time. But a month since James and he was at work together, along with some others, and I don't know how it was, and nobody knows—for my boy himself says he can't tell how it was—unless the evil one put it into his head, for he loved Henry all the time. But somehow or other Henry said something to vex him, and would not give over joking, and so James got in a great passion, and struck him, and Henry fell; and my boy was the first to take him up; and they carried him home, and sent for the doctor, but he only lived nine hours. And oh, Miss Helen, only to think of his having killed one like his own brother in a passion; and all, may be, because I did not teach him better in his youth, and the blood is on both our heads,—and I made him a murderer!" Here tears checked the poor woman's utterance.



Helen allowed her to weep for some time without speaking, whilst she too was thinking of the fearful effects of passion, and fancy gave Dormer to her with the look and mien of a Cain, the murderer's brand upon his brow. She shuddered at the thought, then strove to recover her own composure to comfort the weeping widow. Her soothings were not tendered in vain. How could they be?

"Then the fault 's all mine, for not teaching him better, and James is not to blame. Oh, do tell him so dear, dear Miss Helen!"

"Not exactly so, Mary. At his age all have the power to subdue their passions, if they apply humbly and sincerely for strength from whence only strength can come; but your injudicious indulgence made the task difficult indeed. Did the young man die without forgiving him, or could not he speak."

"Yes, he forgave him; and told every one he was sure James meant him no harm, and that his head had struck again a stone as he fell; and then he made James take hold of his mother's and sister's hands, and told him to stand in his place, and be a son and a brother to them; and my poor boy says 'tis this kindness that's killing him. Oh, Miss Helen! do pray speak to him; for you can comfort any body; he is sitting in his favourite arbour now. Shall I call him?"

“No!” said Helen, the tears standing thick in her beautiful eyes, “we will seek him. But why did he not go to Mr. Norton?”

“He said it was of no use, he knew he was too wicked to be saved; and he mopes, and sighs, and has got so weak, I am sadly afeard he will never recover. He sits all day long in that arbour that Henry and he planted, and he won’t have it cut, for he says ’tis fitter for him as it is; and he won’t tend to any thing, and ’tis as much as I can keep things a little tidy; and he won’t go out to work, for he can’t bear to see any one.”

They passed through the house, and entered a garden at its back, where they found the young man just as his mother had said.

“Here is Miss Helen come to see you, James.”

The wretched young man withdrew his hands from his face, and rose instantly, but evidently with the intention of avoiding the meeting, if possible, but as this could not be done without brushing rudely past Helen, who stood just before him, he was obliged to remain; for not a creature within miles of Hurlestone would have shown her disrespect. But though he still stood before her, his pale face was half turned away, and his trembling limbs plainly spoke his agitation.

“James,” said Helen, in a tone which told how much she pitied him, “your flowers always look so gay and so flourishing, you must come and attend to my favourite garden at Hurlestone.”

He turned round abruptly, met her look of pity, then glanced at his mother, and understood every thing at once.

“No, no! Miss Helen,” he said, in a wild and melancholy tone, “it cannot be—I see my mother has been speaking to you, and I thank you for your kindness, but I could not do a day’s work now, even if I would; and I could not bear to be with others, for their looks would tell me, more than I know already, what a wicked creature I am. No, no, no! I can do nothing but lie down at his feet to die;” and he turned away as though the sight of a fellow-creature was hateful to him.

Helen’s tears fell as fast as the mother’s, but she was not thus to be turned from her kind purpose.

“It is right and natural you should grieve; but not as one without hope. I will not say your guilt was light, even though the deed was done in passion, not malice, and sorrowed for instantly, as that very passion was a crime; but where is the sinner, however vile, who may not hope for pardon, if he repent and turn to

God, trusting in his Saviour's blood alone? I need not tell you of the many instances recorded in that Holy Book, given for our consolation and instruction."

"There may be hope for others; but there can be none for me. He was as my brother; he had never done me wrong." He paused for an instant, as if the recollection had recalled every former pang; and then added, more wildly than ever, as he saw her tears, "Ah, Miss Helen, you can shed tears for me, and I thank you, wicked creature as I am; but I cannot shed them for myself. And what if I could? Can tears, can repentance wash out the stain of blood? Can they bring the dead to life again? I cannot live, and yet I fear to die!"

"The tears of faith and repentance can wash out the stain of blood; and if you cannot give life to the dead, you should seek to repair their loss to the living."

"If I could! if I could!" he exclaimed impetuously.

"You can, in a great degree, by attending to his wishes; becoming a son to his mother—a brother to his sister."

"No; no; they must hate me! and 'tis the very kindness of his words that is killing me. I hear him now, throwing all the blame upon himself."

“ But they do not hate you ; and the kindness of his words should be your consolation, since they prove him the fitter to die. It is selfish to wish to recall the good to life. There is still one way left to prove your love for him and for your mother, who is grieving sadly now. Give not way to despair ; but pray in faith for forgiveness and hope, and, by returning to your former industrious habits, strive to maintain his mother and yours.”

“ Yes, James,” said the widow, “ they shall live with me here, and share all I have, if you will but listen to Miss Helen.”

“ But I cannot pray,” replied the young man, in a sad but calmer tone, whilst a gleam of hope for one instant quenched the madness of despair ; for he was softened and soothed by Helen’s gentle but earnest entreaties, and her pitying tears seemed to have the power of cooling the burning of his brain. “ I cannot pray, for he ever stands between me and heaven, looking as when I first struck him down ; and I cannot work, for my strength is gone.”

“ But you will be able to do both in time. Think of the young man as he looked when he bade you protect his mother and sister ; and go in and read to your mother. Who shall tell the moment when you may be able to pray, or when those prayers may be heard ?”

“ I dare not read in that Book, for it is too holy for such as I am even to look upon ; and I dare not meet his mother and sister.”

“ Then your mother or I will read to you ; and his mother and sister shall seek you.”

Helen's earnest kindness prevailed, and despair, though loath to quit its prey, at length gave place to hope. His heart was softened, and soothing tears fell from beneath his burning eye-lids as he listened to the gracious words of that blessed Book, as they fell from Helen's lips, read in a simple but fervent manner. The widow threw her arms round her son, and their tears mingled together—holy tears, sweeter, more blissfull than the brightest smile.

Helen glided from the cottage with a noiseless step, for she would not check those tears by her presence ; and entered another not far distant. In a few minutes the widow Feller, with her daughter, were in the cottage of the widow Watts, and by their kind assurances of forgiveness and regard had soothed the young man into what might almost be called happiness, compared with his former agony. What always gave Helen's endeavours to do good their greatest value, and increased their effect, was the total absence of all pretension. Every thing she did was done in simplicity and sincerity ; and she ever won esteem and gratitude,

if not success. In the present instance she succeeded to the utmost of her wishes, and had the pleasure of seeing James Watts in a short time resume his former active industry, and, by means of her encouragement and favour, provide for those he loved. Nor was his temper left unsubdued, though that was no light task, or speedily accomplished.

When Helen returned to Hurlestone, she seated herself in her own morning room, and took up her pencil to finish a drawing for her aunt, but her hand trembled, and the strokes were crooked and undecided. True there had been much of pleasure in her morning's visit—for the good must ever feel delight in doing good—but yet it had been a fearful warning, and fancy still made Dormer the hero of the tale. Whilst her thoughts would dwell on that painful subject, and the pencil still trembled between her fingers, a horseman darted past the window. A richer glow came to her cheek, for she thought it might be him; and more than ever anxious, nervous, and over-excited as she had been, to avoid what might prove a distressing interview, she snatched up her bonnet to leave the house; but before she could accomplish her purpose, a hurried step was heard in the hall, the door was flung hastily open, and her cousin stood before her.

There was a crimson spot upon his cheek, a fire in his eye, and an impatience in every movement, that showed Helen at a glance he was in no amiable mood; and even had it been otherwise, he was the very last person, Dormer himself excepted, whom she would have wished to have seen at that moment. But whatever were her wishes, she felt something was to occur that would require all the composure she could summon, and, accustomed from a child to self-control, it was astonishing to see how suddenly one possessed of such quick feelings could resume the command over her emotions, when need required. Her look and start of surprise, and perhaps displeasure, might have satisfied the keenest observer as to her total ignorance of what visitor she had to expect; but there were feelings raging in Robert's heart which blinded his judgment, and, without the ceremony of a good morning, he asked sternly and abruptly, "Why were you seeking to avoid me?"

"A polite salutation to a lady in her own boudoir, on my word, Robert! You should study Chesterfield, or under one of the old regime. I was not seeking to avoid you; for the very obvious reason, that unless I had been Nostradamus himself, I could scarcely have guessed of your coming. What can have induced you



to desert the brilliant circle in town for the dull monotony of the country? In a word, to what am I indebted for the honour of your visit?"

"There was a time when you would have said pleasure," remarked he sternly.

"Why, my dear Robert, you cannot possibly pretend ignorance that 'the once upon a time' of former days is now one of the has-beens; *parler en femme*, gone out with short waists and long crops." She saw he understood the double meaning of her words, and then proceeded, still more playfully, albeit in no really playful mood:

"*Outre que cela*, you looked so very sublime, with your hat nearly pushed from your head by the more polite curls, shocked at its ill-breeding in keeping its station, that I thought honour the least grand name I could apply to you; particularly as you came express, and, for the moment, brought alarm rather than pleasure."

"Ha! you expected some other visitor; and you look flurried, my cousin!" he said searchingly.

"I certainly did not expect you; and that I hoped for no agreeable visitor was proved by my preparing to flee 'to the wild wood's lonely glade;' and distressed I have been, as you think."

Her frank answer and unembarrassed manner calmed him, and throwing his hat to the other end of the room, to the imminent peril of some of her pet curiosities, he took her hand and led her to a seat.

After looking over her drawing for a moment, he said, "You have drawn ill this morning, mine cousin!" and then, glancing over her sketch-book, he continued pettishly, "Marston! Marston! Marston! You seem never weary of drawing that. How many sketches have you taken of it lately?" turning full upon her.

"Not one, I have been otherwise engaged;" and she showed him a very beautiful sketch of Stanmore, glad to turn the conversation from Marston.

"Is this for me, Helen?" he asked, delighted at her having been thus employed.

"When you deserve it!" she replied, playfully taking it from him. "But you have not told me yet why you left London."

"Business," he muttered, and then relapsed into silence.

"What stories these lordly creatures tell!" thought Helen, making business an excuse for every thing. Then a thought glanced through her mind. She had once heard it hinted that her cousin gamed. Could a loss have occa-

sioned his present gloom? She laid her hand kindly upon his arm, and looked up in his face.

“Dear Robert! has any thing happened to distress you? Only tell me. You know you can command my fortune.”

“Any thing but your heart, Helen!” he replied with a flashing eye, rebuked rather than soothed by her kindness.

“Not so, Robert! I look upon you as a brother.”

“A brother!” he repeated scornfully, then added: “will you let me command as a brother?”

“A brother only commands through love and reason.”

“And if I commanded, you would say I heeded neither one or the other.”

“Probably.”

He was silent again, and then asked abruptly: “What distressed you this morning?”

“The agony of James Watts, at having taken away life in a fit of passion,” she answered, looking steadily at him.

There was a something in her clear cold tone and steady look which awed him. The colour on his cheek went and came, whilst his lower lip quivered with the strong pressure of his teeth upon it. But the dark mood was upon

him, and in a few minutes he answered scornfully : " A most distressing occurrence truly to the highly-born heiress of Hurleston Park. One delver of dirt destroys another in a fit of passion, and she must needs weep his epitaph."

" For shame, Robert! life is as precious to the low as to the high ; and the souls of both equal in the eyes of Heaven."

" Never trouble yourself to repeat the homily to me ; but rather save it for your new favourite, Mr. Percy Dormer : if report speaks true, he is none of the gentlest, and it may save him from being tried for murder. Ha ! have I touched you !" he continued, as shocked by his violence and the idea he had conjured up, he marked her shudder ; and he grasped her arm and fixed his searching eyes upon her.

" You have touched and grieved me too, Mr. Euston ; more deeply than I can well tell you ;" she replied, feeling more than ever the necessity of firmness, and recovering herself instantly, as she withdrew her arm from his grasp, and met look with look. " I find I have no longer a cousin. Allow me to wish you good morning," and she rose to leave the room.

" You shall hear me first !" and he placed himself before her.

" Not contrary to my own inclination in this

house, Mr. Euston. Impede my passage, and the servants shall force my freedom. I have already heard too much," and her hand touched the bell rope.

"The threat is vain; you would neither subject yourself or me to such a degradation."

"Trust not to that; you have inured me to degradation, and nothing can sink you lower than your own unmanly conduct."

There was not a symptom of wavering in her tone or manner, and he said less fiercely:

"Helen! Helen! how can you give up an old friend for the sake of a new acquaintance?"

"There is no question of the sort."

"There is—there is—but he shall never live to possess you."

"Pass from the door," said Helen indignantly, even whilst her blood ran cold at the threat. "I will bear no more."

He dared no longer disobey, but whilst he stepped aside, implored her by their childish love to forgive his violence, and listen to his words.

Though almost worn out by the constant recurrence of these scenes of outrage, she was softened, and lingered, seating herself at his entreaty; but near enough the door to depart at her pleasure. The subject that had been touched on, and that would, most probably, be

touched on again, was to her the most painful that could well have been chosen; yet with all her outward firmness she felt the danger of driving her cousin to extremity, and sat in dread of his next sentence, whilst his silence equally proclaimed the difficulty of wording that sentence to please himself. Thus situated, it was a relief to both when Mrs. Hargrave came in and welcomed Robert, to Helen's fancy not quite as an unexpected guest.

The sound of carriage wheels induced him to take his leave, as he felt no inclination to encounter strangers. Mrs Hargrave asked him to stay dinner, but, as Helen did not second the invitation, he departed the more readily, as he heard she had an engagement with Miss Jones at two, and talked of bringing her back with her.

“Do not let us part in anger Helen, though I own I deserve it;” he said, as she drew back from his extended hand. “If you knew what I suffer when I offend you, you would pity me.”

Touched by his avowal of error, she gave him her hand: and as he pressed it, he said, “I would I could be all you wish.”

The belief that Mr. Dormer had left the country, notwithstanding her morning's agitation at a strange sound; the knowledge that

once to show fear or weakness would deprive her of all control over her cousin's fierce temper, had enabled her act as she had done ; but all the events of the day had been harassing and alarming, and anxious to be alone, she did not ask Miss Jones to return with her, no longer requiring her presence to prevent a *tête-à-tête* with her cousin.

Dismissing her pony carriage, and accompanied by her favourite Bran, she turned into one of the beautiful walks which wound through the stately woods: "where the home of her forefathers stood." Absorbed in melancholy thoughts, she pursued her way mechanically, till a loud bark from Bran, the snorting of a horse, and the rustling among the branches, made her start; and, almost before she could look round, Mr. Dormer had sprung from his horse, taken her hand, and was pouring forth in warm and eloquent terms his delight at their meeting.

The surprise, nay almost terror, occasioned by his sudden appearance; the fear of what might occur should he by any chance encounter her cousin in his present temper; the remembrance of Dormer's haughty conduct at their last meeting; and above all the scenes of the morning, were too much for a frame ever delicate. She turned pale, trembled, and must

have fallen had not his arm supported her. The anxious tenderness of his expressions whilst so doing, revealed the state of his feelings, and convinced her of the greater necessity for the exertion. She would have given much for tears, that woman's panacea; but struggling against them, with a strong effort she recovered herself sufficiently to stand without his support, and declining even the assistance of his arm, she leant for a moment against a tree. Her next task was to laugh at her own folly and nervousness, and to attribute the temporary faintness to having been harassed in the morning, and to the surprise and alarm occasioned by his sudden appearance.

The task was executed with no inconsiderable degree of self possession, and without, as she thought, a single flattering expression; and yet, to her mortification and confusion, she saw plainly from her companion's manner, that his love or vanity led him to interpret her conduct according to his own wishes.

She would have wished him good morning at once, but the glimpse of a horseman through some distant trees, made her fear that by so doing she might risk the chance of his meeting with Robert; besides, his manner made it doubtful whether a dismissal, however cold, would



not rather accelerate than retard a more open demonstration of regard. Her only plan, therefore, was to reach the house as soon as possible; to shelter herself in Mrs. Hargrave's presence; and to maintain a cool and indifferent demeanour during her walk thither. But she found more difficulty than she had imagined in maintaining this cool indifference.

Mr. Dormer surpassed himself in brilliancy and fascination, and none, who had seen him then for the first time, would have guessed at the fiery passions hid under such a dazzling exterior. Her coldness he mistook for maiden bashfulness, and in the strength of his own wishes read her conduct as it pleased him best. His usual hauteur was tempered by tenderness; and Helen felt, as she listened, she had met none like him before, and she might meet none like him hereafter. He found the walk so delightful, he would have lured her to linger and gaze on the beauties around, but she pleaded fatigue as an excuse; and her pale cheek, only occasionally lit up with a gleam of brightness from the force of his eloquence, proved the truth of her plea. Still she declined his proffered arm, and still he read the refusal as he wished.

“ If you knew how anxiously I have sought to meet you, day after day, riding through every

part of your domain, where there were paths and where there were none, surely you would not seek to make this interview so short!" he said, as her wish to reach the house became more apparent.

It was not in mortal woman to feel other than gratified by such seeking, from such a man; but she answered only politely, without slackening her pace :

" I am sorry you should have had so much trouble ; I have been from home for the last few days." But she did not add, what was the truth, " for the purpose of avoiding him."

" Trouble ! What a word to use ! One would think we had met but to-day, whereas my vanity has been whispering the hope, that sympathy can make one hour of real living life worth years of merely dull existence."

The look, the words, the tone, might have made it difficult for Helen to have answered as she could have wished ; but the stream to which Alford had given the name of *Lethe*, bursting on her view, with all its memories and associations, gave her an advantage of which she did not fail to avail herself.

" By your own desire, I believe, to-day is to be considered the second of our acquaintance ? " and she glanced towards the stream.

He had forgotten every thing that had passed

at that interview, till this look recalled it to his mind. Violent as was his temper, yet never retaining enmity against any one himself, and trusting to others having the same forgetfulness, he rarely troubled himself about apologies, and his proud spirit had seldom the humiliation, as he thought it, of owning itself in the wrong. But other feelings governed him now, and in answer to her look he pleaded earnestly, with a heightened colour, though rather a lordly manner, that she would pardon and forget all in his words or actions that had at any time been displeasing to her.

“That I erred, greatly erred, I own; but there are times when a word can urge to frenzy—there are doubts sharper and deadlier than poisoned swords.”

He was still pleading his cause, with impassioned eloquence, and she listening in embarrassed silence, when the whine of a beggar caused an interruption, to the annoyance of one party and the relief of the other.

“Please to bestow your charity on a poor distressed weaver.”

“Begone!” cried Dormer in no gentle tone, enraged at the interruption, and then, never dreaming of disobedience to a mandate of his, turned again to address Helen.

“Please to bestow your charity on a poor dis-

tressed weaver, with a wife and six hungry children;" again whined the ill-looking man, close to Helen's ear.

"Begone, I tell you!" repeated Dormer, with a look and tone so terrible that Helen trembled; but she had no silver, and feared to irritate him still more by stopping. But the man was not to be repulsed, and his disagreeable whine still mingled with Dormer's manly voice, as he continued to address his fair companion. Dormer had been seeking this interview with a pertinacity, a stooping to woman, he had never shown before; and now that he had gained it, augured all he desired from her manner. Was this impudent interruption to be borne, when perhaps the colour of his future life hung on that moment? All the feelings that the disappointments of his days of fruitless seeking had awakened, rushed at once to his mind, and in the moment of his passion that man seemed the cause of all. The whine became louder and more importunate—Dormer could bear no more—he stepped back, and before any one could guess his intention, the beggar was lying on the ground, and the blood flowing down his face. Helen turned deadly pale, but repulsing Dormer's offer to support and lead her away, with a look of reproach, which well nigh maddened him, she knelt beside the beggar, and wiped the

blood from his face. But slightly stunned by the blow, he recovered almost instantly, and our heroine had the relief of finding his injury was not worth mentioning. Her kindness prevented all expression of violence towards her; but as he rose, the look he threw on Dormer told of hate to be increased rather than diminished by time. That gentleman's answering look was not less fierce, with this difference—in his there was only the rage of the present; in the beggar's the rage of the past, the present, and the future were mingled, and only made his silence the more frightful.

No sooner had his victim fallen than Dormer repented of the act, and would have more than repaired the injury, as far as money and kind words could have done it; and indeed he had assisted her to recover him; but the look of reproach from her, and the vindictive glare of the beggar, roused all his pride, and he stood with haughty mien prepared to defend the deed if necessary. To Helen's enquiry if he could walk now, the man simply answered "Yes;" and, anxious to end the scene, she expressed her sorrow for what had passed, and taking three sovereigns from her purse gave them to him; telling him to leave the neighbourhood directly, and adding, "for your own sake you had better be silent." Dormer would have remonstrated,

but she was resolute, saying, after her alarm she claimed the right to act as she pleased. The man took the money with thanks, and either grateful for her kindness, or to gain more at some future time, promised secrecy; then, turning to Dormer with another look of hate, he clenched his fist, muttered, "We shall meet again," and then took a path which led from the park.

Alarmed and distressed at the late scene, it was with the greatest difficulty Helen could prevent herself from fainting; and it was with slow and languid steps that, drawing down her veil, she proceeded towards the house in silence. Her companion walked by her side as silent as herself. The very consciousness of error, a consciousness he could not smother, made her disapprobation the more galling; whilst his overweening pride whispered, her love should have taught her to judge more mildly. It was not till they had nearly reached the house that he spoke.

"Allow me to repay the money you gave that man," presenting it as he spoke.

"By no means," she answered hastily, "it was given to please myself, not you."

"Pardon me, it was to repair what I had done."

"Give it to some charity then, as you are so scrupulous."

"I understand you," he said, in a half proud half melancholy tone; "you detest me too much to receive even a debt from my hands; But you have ever judged me harshly."

"I do not judge you harshly, Mr. Dormer, but I cannot do other than regret that you allow such mastery to your passions."

"Surely, if you regret it you would wish to change it. Do but listen to my prayers? It rests with you to make me what you will;" and he looked upon her with those superb dark eyes, the only fitting speakers of his bright hopes.

She withdrew the hand he would have taken, avoided his look, and answered with as little tremour as could be expected.

"That cannot be, Mr. Dormer. I must ever feel an interest in your welfare, but the amendment which is founded only on the approval of a being erring like yourself, has too low and unstable a basement to be lasting or effectual."

They reached the house as she finished speaking, and, most desirous to put an end to the interview, she would have wished him good morning without asking him to enter; but, most unfortunately, the rain which had been threatening all day at this moment began to fall, and a servant appearing to take his horse, common humanity, as well as common polite-

ness, obliged her to invite him in, though, had she been blessed, or cursed, whichever it may be, with second sight, it is doubtful if she would have offered him shelter, though it had rained cats, dogs, and pitch-forks. But Helen was a southern maiden, and every event of this day had proved that her ken extended not beyond the present.

It had been a day of troubles and *contre-temps*; but as she ushered her guest towards the drawing-room, fully anticipating the presence of Mrs. Hargrave, she flattered herself he would soon depart, and leave her time to think and to rejoice at having prevented a meeting between him and her cousin. So much for Helen's schemes and Helen's foresight. Had she pressed her cousin to dine, she would have known better how to avoid him; had she procured the company of Miss Jones, Dormer might not have joined her; had she proceeded to the library instead of the drawing-room, she would have found her aunt: but she had done none of these things, and her dismay can be better imagined than described, when on throwing open the door to admit her visitor, she found herself fronting the very person she would at that moment have least wished to front—Robert Euston. This was a *contre-temps* she had not anticipated. That very



thing should come to pass which she had laboured so hard to prevent! What then? Heiresses must meet with troubles as well as other people. Had she seen a ghost, if such things are, she could not have been more alarmed; and would have felt little scruple in consigning her cousin for a while to a companionship with all the evil spirits laid in the Red Sea since time began, "With candle, with book, and with bell." She had well nigh given up the matter in despair, for Dormer had entered the room, and to show him elsewhere was impossible, when the curl of her cousin's lip, as he marked her terror, and the look of defiance that passed between the gentlemen, showed her the danger of allowing two such fiery spirits to come in collision, and roused all her powers to prevent further mischief. Availing herself of the fashionable dogma of non-introduction, which allows you the happy chance of ridiculing your next neighbour unwittingly, for the gentlemen as yet knew each other only by sight, she motioned Dormer to a chair as much out of Robert's view as possible, and seated herself between them. Checking Robert with a look which brought the colour to his cheek, she commenced the difficult task of balancing her politeness and keeping the peace. Difficult as was the task, her success was for

some time perfect. Neither gentleman spoke to the other, but both conversed with her. Dormer willingly, nay anxiously, as a means to banish the memory of the past; her cousin, as a matter of policy, to prevent any favour to his rival. Her success was so far beyond her hopes that, the weather having cleared, she was again entertaining the idea of a speedy release from her unpleasant situation, when her cousin, thinking she had bestowed too much attention for the last few minutes on her other visitor, availed himself of the first pause to say, with an air of mingled impertinence and nonchalance, "Suppose, Helen, you finish that 'Tale of Passion' you began, and the accompanying homily for our edification."

Had Robert studied a thousand years he could not have hit on a subject more annoying to his rival, who imagined him, from these words, aware of the scene with the beggar; but his flashing eye at the insult was fortunately hidden from the insulter. This certainly must be the crowning mischance of the day. Nothing now could present a collision between them, and she turned pale at the thought.

"Come, Helen," continued her cousin, amazed at the effect of his own words, and heedless of her distress so he could but annoy

Dormer, "pray let us have the story. Something about one man knocking down another in a passion, was it not?"

Dormer rose from his seat in mighty wrath, threw a reproachful glance at Helen, forgetting in his rage the utter impossibility of her having told her cousin one word concerning the beggar, and then strode towards Robert. The very imminence of the danger again roused Helen to exertion. She stepped instantly between the wrathful spirits, answered Dormer's look with one that, whilst it declared her innocence, told also her wish to save him from further pain, asked his opinion of a drawing on a table near, and then answered her cousin with a coldness that showed her displeasure.

"No, Robert! I am not going to weary Mr. Dormer with the village tale I began to you this morning; it could only be interesting to those knowing the parties."

"I beg pardon, I thought the moral might be edifying and amending to all."

"I have strong doubts if any thing will ever amend you," she answered, still more coldly; then seizing, with woman's wit, on anything to change the conversation, she summoned them both to look at a new horse which just then passed the windows; and the whole party in consequence adjourned to the lawn, Helen still

keeping between them. Some fresh cause for dispute might have arisen whilst discussing the merits of the animal, had not the sound of the dinner-bell proved to Dormer the necessity of his instant departure, if he at all valued Lord Marston's good humour.

"Think not of me too harshly," he said, as he bade Helen adieu, "and forgive me if I doubted your kindness for a moment; to-morrow we meet again."

A bow of such studied politeness passed between the gentlemen, as told the humour of their minds.

"Have I your permission to dine at Hurlestone, Miss St. Maur?" asked her cousin ironically.

Helen durst not say no, and would not say yes; so steered a middle course.

"You are Mrs. Hargrave's guest, I conclude."

He read her thoughts, and to terrify her into more cordiality flung away rudely, saying, "Then I ride back with Mr. Dormer. I want excitement."

"Do so, and these doors are closed against your return."

He looked fiercely at her, but her eye sank not beneath the gaze, and he dared not fulfil his threat.

“Allow me to conduct you back to the drawing-room.”

“Excuse me, I must dress for dinner ;” and declining his proffered arm, she passed on to her dressing-room.

## CHAPTER X.

The hero moved on, like a cloud before a ridge of heaven's fire ; when it pours on the sky of night, mariners foresee a storm.

OSSIAN.

As breeze and tide to yonder skiff,  
Thou 'rt adverse to the suit I bring,  
And cold as is yon wintry cliff,  
Where sea-birds close their weary wing.

WHEN Helen descended from her room, which was not till dinner had been announced, she pleaded a severe headache in excuse for her ill looks and little appetite, and scarcely spoke during the repast. Robert was either sulky, or something very like it, and the dinner neither afforded a display of

“ The feast of reason or the flow of soul.”

Vain was his hope of meeting his cousin alone in the drawing-room ; she did not appear till late in the evening, and he would not have seen her then, had she not feared to irritate him to some desperate act. When she did appear her looks were a rebuke to his violence.

Mrs. Hargrave was too much his friend to be in the way, and soon left the cousins together. Robert would have preferred an opportunity of observing what effect his words might produce on Helen; but she baffled his purpose by remaining in the recess of the window, and sending the lights to the other end of the room, on the plea of her head-ache.

He felt he had said too much in the morning not to say more; and his ill humour had been increased by seeing her return with Dormer. He must either apologize for the past, and promise for the future, which he had done a hundred times before, and broken the promise as soon as made, or he must carry the matter with as high a hand as he dared, and make himself appear to be the party aggrieved. It need scarcely be said he chose the latter course. In crossing the apartment to take a seat beside his cousin, so heedless had his ill-humour made him, and so little light was there in that part of the room, that he first fell over a footstool, and then nearly threw down a flower-table, splashing the water around in no measured quantity. One or two hasty exclamations, which did him no credit, escaped him; but Helen took no further notice of his conduct or mischances, than drawing a table in such a manner as to prevent his taking a seat beside,

or exactly before her ; yet at the same time allowing herself free passage from her den, should she wish to retreat. Having repaired the damage as well as his impatience would permit, he took the nearest seat to hers which her manœuvre had left him, and as a polite preliminary asked if her head were better. No, rather worse ; was the answer, and then there was another silence, whilst the gentleman felt all the difficulty of making a commencement. At length he began again, in as careless a tone as he could assume.

“ Mrs. Jones says, that your gallant preserver, the Knight of the Bridge, and Mr. Percy Dormer are one and the same.” He paused, but receiving no answer continued more vehemently. “ She also says that he is your accepted lover, and that the nuptials are to be celebrated immediately.” Still no answer. “ What say you to this ?” he inquired in a rage.

“ That Mrs. Jones will say any thing,” replied his cousin with the most provoking indifference ; “ and that I have heard you declare you would not crush a slug on her word.”

“ This pretended indifference, and repetition of my words, will not succeed. I have asked a plain question, and will have a plain answer.”



“ Stop ! you must first allow me to ask questions and have answers. Was the purpose of your second visit to Hurlestone only to repeat the idle tale of an idle gossip ? ”

“ You shall not thus evade my question Helen. I will be answered ! ”

“ Shall and will, Mr. Euston, are words which can no longer be used from you to me.”

His passion rose higher and higher as he felt himself in the wrong, and found her disinclination to yield to his vehemence. Stamping his foot with violence, he insisted in a furious tone on an answer.

“ On what grounds, Mr. Euston. As a reward for your very disinterested concern for my welfare ; or as a recompense for your very gentlemanly conduct of this morning ; or your equally gentlemanly behaviour of this evening ; or for your thousand promises of gentleness, so freely given, and so rarely kept.”

Galled by these truths, his fury almost choked his utterance, as he exclaimed ; “ I claim an answer as your nearest relative ; I claim it by the love I have so long borne you : and I warn you to refuse it at your peril. You shall not tamper with me, as in the morning ; there is no bell near you now.”

Her only answer was to hold up before him an antique bell, that had stood on the table before her.

He paced the room with hasty strides, and then spoke again.

“ I ask but one question ; refuse to answer if you dare. Are you engaged to Mr. Dormer ? ”

There was a fierce sternness in his tone which made Ellen tremble, though the darkness prevented his perceiving it, and she feared to refuse him.

“ Were it not for old remembrances, I would not parley with you a moment longer ; but for your mother’s sake, and because these reports are offensive to maiden delicacy, I will say I am not engaged to Mr. Dormer.”

“ Say rather for the sake of your minion’s safety you answered my question ; and well was it that you did so. If I find there has been falsehood, look to it ! His blood rest on your head ! ”

Indignant at this insult, she rose, wheeled the table from before her, passed out close to Robert, looking at him as she did so ; stood out in the full light, and bade him leave her presence, and never enter it again without her express permission. As she stood, with one arm slightly extended, the bright curls thrown back from her high forehead, dazzling with its whiteness ; her delicate form raised to its full height, and the fire of woman’s offended dignity flashing in her eye, and flushing on her

cheek ; she looked so bright, so beautiful, that anger faded before admiration, and he stood gazing on her in silence. Then came shame at his late outrage, with the conviction of her truth—for none could look upon her and doubt ; and fearful lest further violence should induce her to enforce obedience to her command, he hastened to avow his error, and once more implore her pardon. She listened to him in silence, only shaking her head mournfully at his promise, knowing, from painful experience, how little those promises could be relied on. He saw her incredulity, and was piqued ; forgetting what good warranty for such doubt his conduct had ever afforded.

“ You distrust me,” he said ; “ put me to the test.”

“ I will. Return to town to-morrow morning, from whence no real business summoned you.”

All his repentance vanished in a moment, his promises were forgotten, and his former fury animated him as he replied.

“ I am no dolt, Helen, to be fooled even by your wiles, beautiful as you are. You would enjoy a *tête-à-tête* amid the romantic wilds of Feldon Park ; but I too shall be there ; and look you how you smile on Dormer.”

“ Mr. Euston,” said Helen, the more indig-

nantly as she had long since decided on declining the morrow's party, "my woman's delicacy is not yet so deadened by your constant suspicions, as to allow me to submit longer to such language. Since my sex, my want of protectors, the propriety of my conduct, the affection of our childhood, and the high honour of a gentleman, cannot save me from insult, it is fitting our acquaintance should end now, and for ever. Pass from before me, Sir,—I would be alone."

"One word, Helen," as he caught her gown. "Promise never to wed with Dormer, and I will be gentle as a lamb."

He saw her colour come and go as he looked upon her, and his very breathing was suspended to hear her answer. She was silent for some moments, and then she said: "That is a promise you have no right to ask, and I no right to give: it would be indelicate and ungenerous to Mr. Dormer. Therefore——"

He interrupted her vehemence. "I warn you, Helen—the rage of the tornado, the earthquake, and the volcano, are nothing to Dormer's passions."

She would have yielded all her fortune for the power of denial, but she dared not even hint a falsehood.

"Your conduct is a sufficient warning against

violence, without your words; and if habit could reconcile, I should smile at the tempest's fury. That Mr. Dormer's name may no more be coupled with mine, I again repeat no engagement does, or is likely to exist between us. And now, since you cannot, or will not, control your temper, and I am ill able to bear these constant scenes of violence, it is better we should meet no more, except in general society. If you have any honour or delicacy left, you will do nothing to make me the gossip of the county; and beware how you force me to seek a protector from your insults."

She disengaged herself from his grasp, and bidding him farewell in a kind but decided tone, passed from the room with a cheek that was very, very pale, but a firm and lofty step.

He heard her words, and saw her departing, but was deprived of all power to detain her. Could it be real? Would she keep her resolve? If so, life would be to him a blank. True she had borne more than any other would have done, and he had had warning upon warning. But could she give up the playfellow of her childhood? her nearest relative? He could not believe it—he would not believe it. If so, it must be Dormer's doing, and he hated him more than ever. Then he thought on her pale cheek as she left the room, and he trembled for

her health. He knew it was a firm and noble spirit enshrined in a fragile form, whose beauty was at times so delicate, as to make the gazer fear as he admired. It would not be the first time that his rage had bowed down this delicate flower. The thought was agony. Should he yield her to Dormer? Never! Never! and he gnashed his teeth as he said it. She might not love him? His hopes revived at the doubt. She had denied the existence of any engagement for the present; but then she had refused to promise for the future. It might be delicacy—it might be a warmer feeling. Doubt, fear, love, anger, and sorrow, raged within him by turns, and passion herself might have taken a warning from the torments he endured. At length one idea became paramount, the fear lest she would see him no more; one wish triumphed over every other, that of winning her pardon; and, at the moment, he thought her forgiveness worth any sacrifice. But how was this to be accomplished? He was still pacing up and down the room, with wild and irregular steps, when Mrs. Hargrave entered. She could not but be shocked at his strange looks and manner, and eagerly demanded the cause. A few incoherent words explained to that lady all he cared she should know; and laying the blame on Helen, as being the one

most likely to thwart her favourite scheme, she readily offered to play ambassadress on the occasion. Fearful that Helen might return a note unread, and equally fearful to force himself into her presence, or to depart without an effort to soften her displeasure, he caught eagerly at the offer, and the lady went on her embassy with the most humble and earnest entreaties for an interview, however short; accompanied by every possible pledge of calmness and non detention. He stood at the open door, and counted her steps, till she entered his cousin's dressing room, and then he leant in breathless expectation; but minute after minute rolled away, and still his messenger returned not. The *peine forte et dure*, now happily abolished, had scarcely more of torture. He fancied he heard a bustle in the distant apartment; he mounted the stairs, but could distinguish nothing, and he descended them again. One moment he augured good, then evil, from the delay. It has been said the longest half hour will have an end, and for this once at least there was wisdom in the saying. At length his messenger returned, but her looks plainly told with no accordance to his wishes.

He asked her by gestures rather than by words, the speeding of her errand. It was certainly any thing but consolatory. She had

found Helen prepared for rest, to avoid all importunities, and looking too ill for even her aunt to propose an interview that night; and Helen had declined giving a promise for the future. "She says she is not angry; but not having health to endure your violence, it is better you should meet but seldom, and never alone. I scolded, told her the agony you were suffering, and at last hinted your mind was in such a state, that I could not answer for your not committing some rash act."

"What said she to this?" inquired Robert eagerly, willing to avail himself of the threat, should it prove likely to serve his cause.

"At first I thought she looked angry; and she said you would leave her no refuge but the grave: then she asked abruptly if you had sent that message; and when I allowed her to think you had, she looked paler than before, murmured 'ungenerous,' and some other words I could not hear, and then she grew so faint I was frightened, and called her maid."

"Fool!" burst from Robert's lips; for, like most others, he was inclined to judge of actions from their effects; and now vehemently disclaimed all intention of threatening violence. Shocked at having been the cause of her illness, he snatched up a pen, and scrawling a few lines, begged Mrs. Hargrave would give



them to his cousin; and that lady, notwithstanding his discourteous demeanour, immediately complied with his wishes. Despite his shame and sorrow, he was selfish and ungenerous enough to avail himself of the power of a vague threat to force from her the promise of an interview; and Helen was but little relieved when she read the following note:

“DEAREST HELEN,—You are ill, and I am the cause! I cannot bear to give you pain—I cannot endure your anger—I will not live banished from your presence. Forgive me for the early past; for my mother’s sake, if you will not for my own. At least allow me one interview to plead my cause before you condemn me to worse than death. Promise this, and you need fear no violence. Say but yes; I ask no more.

Yours, and yours truly,  
ROBERT EUSTON.”

There was nothing in this note on which to ground a hope for the future; and she saw at once that what had been would be again; but too ill to contend, and too fearful to proceed to extremities, she returned him these few lines:

“For his mother’s sake, Miss St. Maur will

see Mr. Euston once more, at twelve, on the day after to-morrow; should nothing have occurred in the mean time to induce her to change her intention."

He bit his lip as he read this cold assent to his wishes; for no sooner was the interview granted than, with his usual inconsistency, he began to quarrel with the manner in which it had been accorded, though he returned a kind and grateful message.

It is a fanciful yet beautiful idea, that loving souls came into the world by pairs; though, if so, there must have been strange wandering from the right road, and some can never have found their fellows till after death.

It is as fanciful, though certainly a far less beautiful idea, that misliking souls have also their fellows in this scene of toil and strife; and that sometime or other during life, all will meet with some one being of whom they will fancy or feel, that as fades or brightens that other's lot, so, in contrast, fades or brightens their own; and to this fancy or feeling, whichever it may be, clings a species of hatred, varying in colour and depth, according to each varying character.

If this theory be true—for being no particular friends to theories, we do not intend to

defend its wisdom—it may account for the feeling partaking of hate, which arose, as if by instinct, in the bosoms of Percy Dormer and Robert Euston, the instant they encountered each other in the drawing-room at Hurlestone. If not true, still the feeling was there; fierce, deep, and lasting. They recognised each other as deadly rivals, and from that moment it wanted but a breath to fan the flame of hate into a destroying fire.

Some people, who pride themselves in accounting reasonably for every thing, might say, that Dormer having heard of the influence supposed to be exercised over Helen by her cousin, and reading his passion for her at a glance, laid the blame of her late coldness on the persuasions of another, rather than on his own violence; whilst Robert, aware of Dormer's superiority, from general report, and occasional meetings, and fearing the effects of his own powers, and Alford's incessant praises, saw in him a rival more to be dreaded, and consequently more to be hated than any other; and that, knowing he was expected in the neighbourhood, he had known him at once from description as Miss Jones's hero, which would account for his violence concerning one all thought a stranger.

We have already stated our dislike to "*les gens qui ont toujours raison*," so cannot be

expected to give a cordial assent to this reasonable statement. Who knows but a homely adage may account for this mortal dislike, more clearly than commentaries, as numerous as those on the Koran: "Two of a trade can never agree?" thus

"When pride meets pride, then comes the tug of war."

It was jealousy which made Robert hurry from town, on learning Dormer was really at Marston, and bending his pride to Helen's beauty; intelligence conveyed by Mrs. Hargrave, amid some odd commissions. Helen's illness had rather softened him, but long before he had reached his own house, he had muttered to himself, "Not till the day after to-morrow—she had better have seen me to-night, or early in the morning. And she would give no promise. Well, let it be: I shall cross her path to-morrow, and let her frown upon me if she dare."

And what were Helen's thoughts through that long, long night?—for she never closed her eyes till after day had dawned. What could they be? The poorest cottager, the meanest beggar unstained by crime, would scarcely have done well to change that night with the noble, the beautiful, the rich, the admired heiress of Hurlestone Park: she whose presence brought

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joy to all; whose goodness and whose loveliness won their way to every heart. She had shuddered at her cousin's violence before; but what was any former fear to the dread of a quarrel between him and Dormer? The passions of the boy would most probably have yielded to judicious control, and left only courage and activity; but such control had been wanting, and poor Helen must pay the penalty of another's fault.

The day of the pic-nic was come; as bright and as beautiful as though it had never been chosen for a party of pleasure, or as though there were no such things in the world as cloudy skies or disappointed young hearts. Helen rejoiced in the beauty of the day for the sake of others; but it could make no change in her own resolve. She doubted not that Robert would join the party, and her presence might again arouse him to fury. Dormer would be there—and they might meet no more. What then? It was better for both that it should be so. She sat down before her writing-desk, and in a short time her messenger was speeding to Marston with the following notes.

*To Lady Catherine Alford.*

MY DEAR CATHERINE,—A violent head-ache will prevent my profiting by your example in

the art of playing popular at Feldon. Will you make all fitting excuses for me to Mrs. Carleton, and accept the same from

Your's sincerely,

HELEN ST. MAUR.

When this note was written, she paused some time ere beginning the second; but she had been haunted all night with images of the dead and dying; the scenes of the day had been acted over again in her dreams with frightful exaggerations and maddening horrors; and she feared to allow a false delicacy to prevent her guarding against the threatened danger. Alford had but lately renewed his offers of kind and brotherly service, and she knew, from experience, that where she was concerned she had nothing to dread from the absence of delicacy or discretion. He had been almost as much a brother to her as her cousin, and ever considerate and consistent. She dared not hesitate; and with a hasty pen wrote as follows.

*To Viscount Alford.*

When must my gardener be prepared for the beautiful flowers you promised? Let me know by the bearer. A head-ache prevents my joining the gay party, so you are released from the office of Preux Chevalier, and can work mischief

at your pleasure. I believe my cousin will be at Feldon; and perhaps in no amiable mood. Could you not keep him and your friend apart? They met here yesterday, and their parting bows were any thing rather than neighbourly: but I know I may rely on your prudence. Were I to say more, a child would understand me.

Your's sincerely,

HELEN ST. MAUR.

P. S. I like gossip almost as well as Mrs. Jones, so you must indulge me with an early account of this rural refection.

To guard against all mistakes, she gave the orders herself.

“Take this to Lady Catherine Alford: it requires no answer. Be sure and deliver this other note only into Lord Alford's own hands, as I must have an answer to it about some flowers; and be back as soon as you can.”

Mrs. Hargrave was in ill-humour at our heroine's not fulfilling the engagement, as she too was convinced that Robert would be there; and poor Helen's head-ache was indeed no vain excuse. Sometimes she wished she had, by appointing that day for seeing her cousin, prevented the possibility of his meeting Dormer at Feldon; but, besides that she really required some hours of quiet to fit her for the interview,

her own wishes led her to desire his absence on this day particularly, though she could have given no good reason for such a fancy.

Ill and restless, she feared she had said too much or too little to Alford; and, as the return of her messenger was delayed minute after minute, her fancy conjured up the wildest images of terror. At length she beheld him coming at full speed, and had it been a lover hasting to meet the lady of his affections, she could scarcely have watched his approach with more anxiety. The contents of the note relieved her fears, and she questioned her messenger as to his delay. It appeared that Alford and Dormer had left Marston early in the morning on some electioneering business; but, mindful of her orders, the man had ridden nearly to Feldon, whither they were to proceed, to deliver the note.

“ You did perfectly right,” she said. “ His lordship tells me the flowers will be here this evening, or to-morrow morning; therefore desire the gardener to join me directly in my flower garden, that I may give him orders to have every thing in readiness.”

Alford's note contained only a few hurried lines in pencil, promising the flowers, and telling her he understood her bidding, and that she might calm her fears, for that he would be her second self in tact and discretion. The note



being written in Italian, lest, having no seal, some prying eye should read its contents, seemed a good earnest of the writer's promised prudence; and Helen felt calmed and re-assured. After arranging every thing with the gardener she returned to the drawing-room; and, to banish a feeling of restlessness and vague presentiment which tormented her, condemned herself to the writing a letter on business for the post. Whilst engaged in this absorbing, if not interesting, task, she was startled by a thundering knock at the hall door, which spoke the impatience of the visitor, and the impossibility of denying herself. All she could do, concluding it must be Robert, was to pass into an adjoining room, and thus secure the option of appearing or not, as might best please her. A servant entering immediately after, announced that Mr. Dormer was waiting her presence in the drawing-room. She could give no good reason for declining the interview, and she entered the room, and returned her visitor's salutation with her usual elegance and self-possession.

He asked kindly, even tenderly, after her head-ache; and the flush which his unexpected visit had brought into her before pale cheek induced him to add, he hoped it was not very severe.

"It is much better now," she replied. "The air has removed much of the pain; but I am certainly not very brilliant, though I have a letter on business to write for to-day's post."

If she intended this as a hint for a speedy departure, he either did not or would not understand it; and there was an impatience, an earnestness in his manner, that seemed to intimate this was not to be looked on as a common morning visit.

"You should have tried the air at Feldon; the regrets at your absence were innumerable. I only regretted not, since I hoped to see you here undisturbed by the folly of the silly and the vain. Yet I feared you might be too unwell to see me, for your cousin announced he had left you very ill last night; and on his persuasions the party lay the blame of your absence."

He fixed his eyes on her as he spoke, and she felt he wished and expected to receive more information than his words demanded. Anxious to destroy all idea of rivalry between them, as well as to contradict the opinion she was aware was entertained by many, that her cousin exercised control over her actions, she answered as fully as her questioner desired.

"I certainly was very unwell last night, but my declining the pic-nic was entirely my own act and deed; and since I never spoke to Mr.

Euston on the subject, he can have learnt only from others my defection and its cause."

"Then he has not seen you this morning, and does not influence your actions?"

"He certainly has neither seen nor heard from me this morning, and his opinions rarely colour my conduct."

"And yet, if the world speak truth, you regard him highly."

There was a slight hesitation as he pronounced the word 'regard,' which Helen perceiving, she herself used it, and laid an emphasis on it.

"I do regard my cousin highly; but the world I believe exaggerates the strength, or mistakes the nature of the feeling. And I rather suspect, were I so inclined, that I might assume the prerogative of majesty, and consider myself as one who can do no wrong; but I am not so inclined, and, in justice, the praise or blame due to every act must rest on myself alone."

The slight shade of doubt or distrust, which had clouded Dormer's brow on his entrance, passed away like a summer cloud, and his ardent spirit shone forth in all its native brightness. Every thing that had pained him in her since their acquaintance—his own violence—all of doubt and fear that he could ever know—vanished from his mind. His usually calm, dignified, almost cold demeanour, changed with

his feelings, and Helen began to suspect in avoiding one danger she had unwarily subjected herself to another. Her self-possession received more than one shock; and doubt, expectation, sorrow, confusion, and a tinge of gratified pride, began to disturb her equanimity. She asked for a frank, and more than hinted her letter should go that day. He wrote the frank, and declared his intention of waiting till her letter was finished; adding she might find him troublesome, but, as he must leave the neighbourhood the next day, he had not self-denial enough to resign the pleasure of her society so soon.

She could but bow and finish her letter, though she sat in dread lest Robert should hear of this visit, and turn the duet into a trio. She concluded her letter as soon as possible, for she felt that though he still retained the book she had recommended, his eyes were fixed on her; and, despite all her endeavours, she was aware the colour varied on her cheek, and that her fingers refused to guide the pen with their usual firmness. The letter was finished, folded, directed; the bell was rung for the servant; the taper was ordered to be lighted, brought back; and the letter was deliberately sealed, and given for the post. She inquired if Mrs. Hargrave had been told of

Mr. Dormer's visit, as she had desired, and was answered that she could not be found. She ordered refreshments, but they were positively declined. There could be no further pretence for detaining the servant, and he left the room. He rose, and approached her; she rose too, shewed some drawings, and moved about to prevent any thing like uninterrupted conversation; but she had the mortification of knowing, almost without looking, that those dark eyes followed her every movement, and that a smile, as she thought, of triumph, curved his lip. All this was strange after her cold reproof of yesterday: but she did not remember he was one of your *Veni-Vidi-Vici* men, who never admit the possibility of failure, and fancy victory must attend their banners if they stop to unfurl them; nor did she know he had overheard more than one of the picnic party assert that the victory was already his. There was a slight noise in the adjoining conservatory; it might be her aunt, and she insisted on showing him a rare exotic. He followed her with the same admiring gaze, the same confusing and triumphant smile. Helen's hopes were vain—it was only the gardener. She would have detained him, under pretence of giving the names of the flowers, but he was gone before she could effect her purpose.

More than two hours had elapsed since they had entered the conservatory, and still the lady was sitting there alone, and sad. There were traces of tears easily to be seen; her hands hung listless by her side, and her head rested against a pillar. The petals of more than one rare plant were strewed around, as if some strong hand had plucked and scattered them, whilst the mind had been intent on other things. The flowers had been brushed by some rude touch from the *datura arborea*, and lay on the white stones, shaming them with their own superior purity. A shower of orange blossoms almost covered the pavement near one of the entrances; and the deep dent of a man's foot in the border, and a broken plant here, with an overturned pot there, showed marks of a rude and sudden exit, and told a tale of rejected love and unrestrained violence.

The dressing-bell rang, and Helen started from her reverie. She looked from the door, but the horseman was far on his road. She replaced the thrown down, tied up the broken, put away the fallen, and sighed as she finished her task, and the signs of ruin were removed. She grieved to look upon them herself: she would have grieved still more had they met other and less friendly eyes.

“ Mr. Euston presents his compliments to Miss St. Maur, and hopes she is better,” were the contents of a note delivered soon after.

“ Miss St. Maur presents her compliments to Mr. Euston, and she is better,” was the note sent in return.

“ Do write a longer note to your cousin,” said Mrs. Hargrave.

“ Pardon me, aunt ; it is cruelty to encourage hopes which can never be realised ; and Mr. Euston’s note proves he has already repented of his late repentance.”

Mrs. Hargrave said no more, and her look of consciousness was not lost upon Helen.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.















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